

# Native Plant Garden

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



Little Bighorn Battlefield  
National Monument  
Montana

The native plant garden at Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument is composed of indigenous species that play a significant role in the lives of the Plains Indians that used this area. Below is a short description of some of the cultural uses for the plants located in the garden.

In addition, the garden includes three grass species native to Montana. Prairie Junegrass (*Koeleria macrantha*, 13), Green Needlegrass (*Nassella viridula*, 6), and Bluebunch Wheatgrass (*Pseudoroegneria spicata*, 3) serve to represent the historic biodiversity of the Great Plains.

Please note that the appearance of much vegetation varies seasonally. Plants may not appear exactly as depicted

For more information about plants in Montana, please visit [fieldguide.mt.gov](http://fieldguide.mt.gov).



**1**  
**Rocky Mountain Juniper**  
*Juniperus scopulorum*  
buluxpée (holy wood)  
be'see3  
šéstótó'e

Rocky mountain juniper is a small tree with blue berry-like seeds. The Arapaho used the needles as a ceremonial incense to scare away ghosts, for purification after burials, and as a disinfectant. The Arapaho also used the aromatic needles to help treat respiratory problems. The berries were used in a tea for sore throats and stomach ailments.



**2**  
**Plains Prickly Pear**  
*Opuntia polyacantha*  
bichkiliíá  
ho'yoox xoo nee  
hon nei xo'o no'o  
heškóvemata

A cactus with rounded pads and long spines, the prickly pear was used for many applications. The Cheyenne used the plant as a thickening agent and emergency source of water. The Arapaho boiled the cactus and used the paste-like product as a lotion for burns and tired muscles and joints. Apsáalooke used the juice from this cactus to waterproof painted rawhide cases.



**4**  
**Skunkbush Sumac**  
*Rhus trilobata*  
íaxxassaaishale  
bee'é'i  
no'aneonó'e

Skunkbush is a member of the sumac family; most species of which yield colorful and astringent berries. The berries were often used to treat stomach ailments. More commonly, they were steeped in water to make flavorful teas. Apsáalooke used the inner bark in a tea to relieve diarrhea.



**5**  
**Fringed Sagebrush**  
*Artemisia frigida*  
ammitaaniisah-chaxuuwe  
nookhoose'  
nee'ee'boi  
he'évánó'éstse  
nasula jazanpi  
ipije peji'ho'ta  
wastemna

The Cheyenne call fringed sagebrush “woman sage” for its use with the sacred woman during the Sun Dance. They also used it to increase appetite. The Lakota used sage smoke for purification, driving away evil influences. Apsáalooke used it to stop bleeding and heal infections.



**7**  
**Prairie Coneflower**  
*Ratibida colum-nifera*  
baauchpashíile  
(yellow tip)  
š'é'senovotsé-hesééo'tse  
wahcha-zi  
chikala  
hapo'stan

The Lakota made a tea from the stalks and leaves of prairie coneflowers to help cure stomach aches. They used the flower tops in a tea to alleviate headaches also. The Cheyenne boiled the leaves and stems to make a liquid. The liquid was applied externally to relieve poison ivy and to draw poison out of rattlesnake bites.



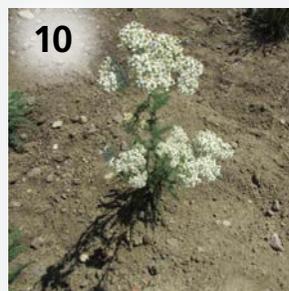
**8**  
**Purple Coneflower**  
*Echinacea angustifolia*  
iiwalaasúuku-luxachkisee (used like a comb);  
ich'fhchishiishipite  
(black root)  
mo'óhtáehesééo'tse

Plains Indians used this showy wildflower to treat venomous snakebites, as a pain reliever, and to treat respiratory illnesses. The seed heads were used to make hair combs. Apsáalooke, Lakota and Cheyenne also chewed roots to produce saliva and relieve thirst. Apsáalooke also chewed the root to prevent toothaches.



**9**  
**Rubber Rabbitbrush**  
*Ericameria nauseosa*  
íisachchax-uushiile (yellow bunched stems)  
vóhkoohé-menó'éstse

One of the only fall bloomers in the garden, rubber rabbitbrush was used by the Cheyenne to treat many ailments including itchy skin and smallpox. They also would burn leaves and branches to help repel nightmares. Apsáalooke used it to alleviate eczema.



**10**  
**Yarrow**  
*Achillea millefolium*  
chihpachiiskisshe  
no'outihii  
he'haéhesééo'tse  
taopi pexuta

Yarrow was generally known as cough medicine, but was used to remedy many ailments. The Apsáalooke used yarrow to treat sunburns, stings, bites, and open wounds. The Arapaho used it to stop bleeding and hemorrhages. The Cheyenne made a tea from the above-ground portion to treat respiratory diseases, heart problems, and chest pain.



**11**  
**Soapweed Yucca**  
*Yucca glauca*  
úuxisbatshuakisshe (deer's awl);  
úuxisbachuakisshe (deer's sinew)  
noo'xei no'xou  
hestáhpánó'e  
hupe'stola

Soapweed yucca was mainly used for hygiene as soap. The Apsáalooke, Arapaho, and Cheyenne used the ground roots in shampoo to stop graying and hair loss as well. The Cheyenne also used yucca to treat skin ailments. The Lakota also used it in tea to treat stomach aches.



12

**Western Snowberry**  
*Symphoricarpos occidentalis*  
 bishkaxchfia  
 méhmemenótse

The Dakota used a tea made from snowberry to heal sore eyes, while the Apsáalooke used it as a cure for sinus problems and head colds.



14

**Beebalm**  
*Monarda fistulosa*  
 bahpuushé  
 mo'éhno'hamé-  
 móxèšéne

Beebalm, also known as horsemint and wild bergamot, was used to flavor and perfume, and as a medicine. The Lakota and Dakota used a tea to treat colds, fevers, and sore throats. Likewise, the Apsáalooke used the tea for respiratory ailments. The Lakota also would boil the leaves, wrap them in cloth, and place the cloth over sore eyes to relieve them.



15

**Curlycup Gumweed**  
*Grindelia squarrosa*  
 baauchpashíilitshia (stinky yellow flower)  
 àhkévó'éstse  
 pte ichi yuha

The Lakota used the bitter curlycup gumweed in a tea to help people spitting up blood, while the Apsáalooke used it for stomach aches and to treat postpartum pain. The Cheyenne also used gumweed to make a topical remedy for scabs and sores, and rubbed the gummy residue on their eyelids to relieve snow blindness.



16

**White Sagebrush**  
*Artemisia ludoviciana*  
 iisachaxuuwí-  
 ilichitche  
 hisei nookhoose'  
 hetanévánó'éstse

The uses of sage for both physical and spiritual cleansing are of great cultural importance for Plains Indians. Apsáalooke, Cheyenne, Arapaho, and Lakota all variously bathed or smudged with sage. The use of white sage as incense was common in many Cheyenne purification rites. Sage is widely used during the Sun Dance.



17

**Chokecherry**  
*Prunus virginiana*  
 baáchuutaale (genuine berry)  
 biino  
 menótse  
 canpa'hu

The chokecherry tree was a crucial plant for the Plains Indians. Ripe chokecherry fruit was often eaten by itself or mixed with bison fat and meat to make pemmican; unripe fruit was used to treat diarrhea in children. The Arapaho also used them ceremonially during the Sun Dance. Chokecherry wood also was the material of choice when making arrow shafts.



18

**Golden Currant, or Buffalo Currant**  
*Ribes odoratum*  
 bichéechihte  
 ne'ibiis  
 hevéhestahtsé-  
 meno

Golden currant, also known as buffalo currant, is a tall deciduous shrub with yellow trumpet shaped flowers. The leaves and berries of this plant were often eaten fresh, as dry preserves, or as sauces. They are rich in vitamin C.



**Scurf Pea, or Prairie Turnip\***  
*Pediomelum esculentum*  
 ihé  
 tovahn'e'ahktse

Also known as scurf pea, prairie turnips were an important food source for Plains Indians. It is believed that several Lakota women were digging turnips west of the river when Maj. Reno's battalion began its attack on the afternoon of June 25, 1876. Prairie turnips are not as common today as they were in the nineteenth century. Evidence suggests that cattle grazing had a negative impact on the species.



**Broom Snakeweed\***  
*Gutierrezia sarothrae*  
 bishéewaaaluushissee (grass the buffalo won't eat)  
 méhmemenó'éstse  
 peji zizi (yellow herb)

Broom snakeweed is a small shrub with bright yellow flowers. The Dakota used the flowers as a laxative for horses, and the Lakota made a snakeweed tea to relieve colds and dizziness. The Cheyenne used snakeweed in altars during the Sun Dance. Apsáalooke use it to treat sinus infection, kidney pain and sore muscles.

**Naming Key**  
 Apsáalooke  
 Arapaho  
 Cheyenne  
 Dakota  
 Lakota

\*Plants not yet present in garden.

