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*Garrya elliptica*

**SILK TASSEL** is an evergreen shrub or tree. Native to south-western North America it has curtain-like clusters of silver-grey male and cream-coloured female catkins. It is also known as Catkin bush, Coast silk tassel, Curtain bush, Feverbush, Fringe tree, Quinine bush, Silk tassel bush, Silk tassel tree, Tassel bush, Tassel tree, and Wavyleaf silktassel. The flowers are pollinated by bees. *Elliptica* means ‘elliptic (curved sides longer than wide and broadest in the middle) or oval’ usually with reference to leaf shape. Some of the North American Pomo Indians used a leaf infusion as a remedy for various period problems. The hairy purple-brown berries are eaten by birds, especially American robins. It was the Scottish botanist, David Douglas (1798-1834) who introduced silk tassel to England when he sent it to the Horticultural Society there in 1834. The fruit yield grey to black dyes dependent upon their ripeness – and some authorities suggest that the bark and leaves may have insect repellent qualities. Today it is sometimes cultivated as an ornamental plant and is said to provide useful hedging, particularly as a windbreak. Although this wood has been used to make furniture authorities note that this is limited by silk tassel’s size and rarity. Medicinally, a decoction of the bark or leaves has been recommended by local herbalists for treating intermittent fevers and some period problems.