

Lonicera involucrata

[Synonyms : *Distegia involucrata*, *Lonicera involucrata* var. *flavescens*, *Lonicera involucrata* var. *involucrata*, *Lonicera ledebouri*, *Xylosteum involucratum*]

CALIFORNIA HONEYSUCKLE is a deciduous shrubby vine. Native to western North America (from southern Canada to Mexico) it has yellow flowers framed by green leaf-like bracts.

It is also known as Bearberry, Bearberry honeysuckle, *Behüllte Heckenkirsche* (German), Black twinberry, Bracted honeysuckle, Bush honeysuckle, Californian honeysuckle, Fly honeysuckle, Four-line honeysuckle, *Hüllblatt-Heckenkirsche* (German), Husk honeysuckle, Involucrated fly honeysuckle, *Kalifornische Heckenkirsche* (German), *Kehtokuusama* (Finnish), *Skärmtry* (Swedish), Twinberry, Twinberry honeysuckle, *Verhülltblütige Heckenkirsche* (German), and *Zimolez zákrovečný* (Czech).

Involucrata is derived from Latin *involucrum* (covering) with reference to the petal- or leaf-like bracts normally found at the base of a flower cluster, usually in a ring or rings and only rarely single or paired.

The unpleasant-tasting, glossy dark purple-black berries are viewed as poisonous by many North American Indian tribes – yet according to authorities' records they were still eaten by the Oweekeno Indians and occasionally by the Thompson and some of the Okanagan-Colville tribes. The Montana Indian tribe are also believed to have dried and stored them for Winter food.

The berries yield a purple dye used by the Makah tribe and a purple paint for the Hesquiat Indians. The Quileute tribe used the juice for painting dolls' faces. (The dye will turn grey if tin is added to the fruit.)

Some of the Navajo tribe used the leaves in ceremonial rituals – and the Makah Indians used the fruit for treating dandruff.

California honeysuckle was a source of medicine for quite a few North American Indian tribes. It seems to have been especially valued by the Thompson, Carrier, Kwakiutl, Bella Coola, Nuxalk, Quinault and Wet'suwet'en Indians for treating various skin disorders such as boils or sores. It was also used for some female problems by the Makah, Okanagan-Colville, Quinault and Kwakiutl tribes. Whalers among some of the Nootka tribe took the plant as an aphrodisiac to ease the periods of forced celibacy when at sea. It was turned to by both the Nuxalk and Bella Coola Indians for treating venereal disease – and coughs. While it was believed to ease pain generally and rheumatism specifically by the Kwakiutl tribe, the Blackfoot chose it as a remedy for stomach upsets and some lung problems. The Blackfoot also took it as a purgative, and in addition they and the Makah and Quileute Indians used it to cause vomiting. It was a tonic for the Thompson and Nitinaht Indians, and for the former it was also a remedy for some urinary ailments. The Gitksan and Carrier Indians applied it to sore eyes and the Quinault and Thompson tribes used it for various oral problems.

Apparently the fruit are enjoyed by birds especially crows – and by bears.

Authorities have noted that the fruit are appreciated by local miners and hunters. They are said to have a pleasant enough taste (perhaps the taste is variable or acquired though as some

authorities report it as being unpleasant) – on the other hand it does not seem to be suggested that their culinary attractions are especially rewarding.