

*Philadelphus lewisii*

[Synonyms : *Philadelphus californicus*, *Philadelphus columbianus*, *Philadelphus confusus*, *Philadelphus gordonianus*, *Philadelphus gordonianus* var. *columbianus*, *Philadelphus lewisii* var. *angustifolius*, *Philadelphus lewisii* subsp. *californicus*, *Philadelphus lewisii* var. *ellipticus*, *Philadelphus lewisii* subsp. *gordonianus*, *Philadelphus lewisii* var. *helleri*, *Philadelphus lewisii* var. *intermedius*, *Philadelphus lewisii* var. *oblongifolius*, *Philadelphus lewisii* var. *parvifolius*, *Philadelphus lewisii* var. *platyphyllus*]

**LEWIS'S MOCKORANGE** is a deciduous shrub. Native to western North America it has fragrant white flowers with many bright yellow stamens (and possibly a slight fragrance). It is also known as California mock orange, *Gordonschersmin* (Swedish), Gordon's mockorange, Indian arrowwood, Lewis' mock-orange, Lewis syringa, Mock orange, Syringa, Western syringa, and Wild mockorange.

The flowers are pollinated by bees.

*Lewisii* commemorates an American soldier and explorer, Captain Meriwether Lewis (1774-1809), who collected plant, animal and mineral specimens (accompanied with detailed notes and ethnographic observations) on the Lewis and Clark Expedition of 1804-1806, exploring unknown territory west of the Mississippi under the aegis of President Jefferson (1743-1826). Although the party ended up blazing an east-west trail across the North American Continent their prime objective was to explore some of 828,000 square miles of Louisiana Purchase bought from the French in 1803. Meriwether served in the US Army from 1784-1800 (part of it under William Clark's leadership). Then in 1801 he became private secretary to Jefferson and was involved in the planning and preparation for the Expedition, as well as studying astronomy, medicine and natural history in Philadelphia, a journey of a total of 8000 miles. Appointed as leader of the Corps of Discovery, Meriwether invited his army friend, Captain William Clark (1770-1838) as co-leader and the party initially set out to gain the starting point on the Missouri River in 1803. They began traversing its upper reaches in Spring 1804 and appreciated the need for co-operation from local Indian tribes during the journey ahead. The Expedition members numbered 33, including a French-Canadian, Toussaint Charbonneau, hired as an Indian interpreter. He was accompanied by his Shoshone wife, Sacagawea (who also acted as interpreter and guide) and these two were to prove to be invaluable additions to the party especially when help was sought from any of the Indian tribes en route. (Sacagawea's presence often reassured some of the Indian tribes – and it was Sacagawea's older brother who led the Shoshones when they were helping the Expedition begin the ascent of the Rocky Mountains, not least with information and horses). Remarkably, despite the demands of crossing those mountains, the Expedition reached the Pacific Ocean in November of 1805. The following year, virtually retracing its steps, the group returned east and reached St. Louis in September 1806 to wide acclaim.. Meriwether was appointed Governor of Louisiana Territory in 1807 and died (a violent and unexplained death) in 1809. He was a Freemason. In addition to plant species, he is also remembered today in some American place names.

For the North American Okanagan-Colville Indians the flowering bushes indicated that the ground-hogs or woodchucks were fat.

It seems to have been the hard and strong wood however that was of the greatest value to most North American Indian tribes. Sticks were used by both Mewuk and Thompson tribes for their basketry, and Paiute Indians split them to make haircombs – whereas the Thompson fashioned combs from the wood. The sticks were also used by the Coeur d'Alene, Paiute and Thompson as digging tools – and several tribes, including the Saanich, Klamath, Okanagan-Colville, Poliklah, Shuswap and Montana Indian used them (and wood) for making arrows. Apart from combs the wood itself was also used for making snow shoes by the Shuwap and Okanagan-Colville Indians, and the Saanich chose it occasionally for their bows. Fishing spears were made from it by the Shuswap, and the Okanaga-Colville used it to make protective clothing such as breast plates and for tobacco pipe-stems and knitting needles. It also provided material for making furniture for the Thompson and Okanagan-Colville tribes.

Bark steeped in warm water offered a face wash for the Shuswap, while the froth was used by Okanagan-Colville Indians for washing their hair and hands.

Some medicinal properties were recognised by several of the North American Indian tribes. The Thompson Indians applied a branch decoction to some skin disorders and, filtered, took it to ease sore chests. They also rubbed swellings or sores with the wood ash or ground dried leaves (mixed with pitch or bear grease). In contrast the Okanagan-Colville tribe believed a plant decoction offered a cleansing agent if taken night and morning.

The State of Idaho in the United States adopted this flower as one of its emblems in 1931 – and in that state it is illegal to collect the plant for sale or export.

Lewis's mockorange can be seen depicted in Canadian and American paintings of local landscapes.

Although not as popular in gardens as its European counterpart mock orange (*Philadelphus coronarius*) Lewis's mockorange has been grown as an ornamental plant too.

In the States of Montana and Washington the deer seem to have a predilection for the plant. Apparently elsewhere game managers watch the degree to which the shrub is being browsed in a particular area as this can give some indication of whether the number of deer supported in that area are being able to find sufficient alternative plants that they prefer. Apart from winter forage for some deer it can also be enjoyed similarly by elk and when it is sufficiently accessible it can be browsed by cattle as well. Squirrels, chipmunks, quail and other birds will eat the seeds. Monarch and swallowtail butterflies also feed on the plant.