

Rubus parviflorus

[Synonyms : *Bossekia parviflora*, *Rubacer parviflorum*, *Rubacer tomentosum*, *Rubus idaeus* var. *americanus*, *Rubus nutkanus*, *Rubus nutkanus* var. *parviflorus*, *Rubus velutinus*]

THIMBLEBERRY is a deciduous shrub. Native to western North America it has small white flowers with many stamens.

It is also known as False raspberry, *Kleinblütiger Himbeerstrauch* (German), *Nutkahallon* (Swedish), *Nutka-Himbeere* (German), *Ostružina* (Slovak), *Ostružiník nutkajský* (Czech), Purple cane raspberry, Salmon berry, and White-flowering raspberry.

Parviflorus is derived from Latin *parvi-* (small, little) and *-flora* (flowered) meaning ‘small flowered’.

Thimbleberry leaves served many purposes for some of the North American Indian tribes. The Okanagan-Colville and some of the Kwakiutl Indians lined their cooking pits with them when they were steaming food, and the Pomo tribe cooked meat wrapped in them. Carrier Indians laid harvested fruit on them to dry, and both the Quinault and Quileute tribes lined food storage containers with them or wrapped stored food directly with them. Boiled bark provided a soap for Cowlitz Indians, and the Blackfoot used the berries to dye tanned garments.

Compared with the young sprouts which were eaten in Spring by the Makah, Montana Indian, Swinomish, Klallam, some of the Salish, the Skagit, Bella Coola, Samish and Nitinaht tribes the berries were far more popular. These Indian tribes (with the possible exception of the Montana Indian) as well as the Blackfoot, Chehalis, Quinault, Thompson, Hoh, Isleta, Karok, Okanagan-Colville, Hesquiat, Tsimshian, Winton, Luiseño, Pomo, some of the Kwakiutl, the Cowlitz, Cahuilla, Snohomish, Shuswap, Yurok, Paiute, Squaxin, Quileute, Sanpoil and Gosiute – as well as the Alaskans – all enjoyed the fruit. They were a delicacy for the Isleta, used to make puddings by the Quileute, made into preserves by the Makah, provided an ingredient for a beverage prepared by the Cahuilla, and used to make jam by the Bella Coola, Makah and Hesquiat tribes. Records show that quite a few tribes including the Klallam, Cahuilla, Thompson, Hoh, some of the Kwakiutl, the Quileute, Hesquiat and Squaxin harvested and stored the berries in various ways for future use. Hesquiat Indians used the leaves as a flavouring in savoury dishes, and the Thompson tribe are said to have used the roots as a sweetening agent.

Various parts of the shrub also provided North American Indian tribes with medicine. The Kwakiutl tribe used it to ease vomiting and stem internal bleeding, as well as prescribing it for some period problems and applying it to wounds. Saanich Indians chewed dried leaflets as a remedy for diarrhoea, and they and the Okanagan-Colville used the leaves and roots respectively to treat stomach upsets. It was employed by the Makah tribe for some blood ailments, Cowlitz Indians applied it to burns, and the Skagit, Thompson and Okanagan-Colville Indians used it for various skin disorders. Both the Montana Indian and Karok tribes took it as a tonic.

The fruit are said to be particularly enjoyed by bears and deer.

Thimbleberry was introduced to Britain from western North America by the Scottish botanist, David Douglas (1798-1834) in 1827.