

Shepherdia argentea

[Synonyms : *Elaeagnus utilis*, *Lepargyrea argentea*]

BUFFALO-BERRY is a deciduous shrub or tree. Native to eastern North America it has tiny greenish-brown flowers.

It is also known as Beef-suet tree, *Haz-shutz* (Winnebago North American Indian), *Laritsits* (Pawnee North American Indian), *Mashticha-pute* (Dakota North American Indian), Nebraska currant, Rabbit berry, Silver berry, Silver leaf, Silver buffalo berry, and Thorny buffalo-berry, *Zho-hoje-wazhide* (Dakota North American Indian).

Argentea means 'silvery or silvered'.

Many local North American Indian tribes including the Gosiute, Ute, Montana Indian, Omaha, Pawnee, Dakota, Paiute, Ponca, Thompson, Navajo and Winnebago harvested the fruit and ate them raw, cooked or dried. With the exception of the Gosiute and Ute tribes those already mentioned, together with the Arapaho ate dried berries in Winter particularly with buffalo meat. Some of the Paiute Indians made the fruit into a porridge-like mush, Montana Indians used the berries to make sauces, the latter and the Arapaho prepared preserves with the fruit, and both the Cheyenne and Paiute Indians used the berries for puddings.

Apparently the Blackfoot tribe were happy for buffalo to graze on the fruit.

Blackfoot Indians obtained a red dye from the berries.

The Dakota tribe held the fruit in some esteem as it sometimes played a role in their ceremonial feasts held for young girls who had reached puberty.

Few North American Indian tribes seemed to have regarded buffalo-berry as a significant source of medicine. Cheyenne Indians used it, as did the Navajo who turned to it for a remedy for fever. The Blackfoot tribe not only took it as a laxative but also prescribed it for stomach upsets.

In more recent times the berries have been used to make preserves, jams and drinks, and these fruit are particularly enjoyed apparently with buffalo steaks or tongue.

The plant has been grown for hedging especially in north-western North America.