



Chumash Indian Museum

Plant Guide

All Plants are signed with the common name, scientific name and Chumash language name as noted by Timbrook (2007). Chumash words are noted with the following abbreviations:

Mitsqanaqan' (Ventureño) – (M)

Šmuwič (Barbareño) – (Sm)

Samala (Inezeño) – (Sa)

Kagimuswas (Purisimeño) – (K)

Island Chumash (Cruzeño) – (IC)

yak tityu tityu yak tilhini (Obispeño) – (ytt)

These plants can be found at the museum, make sure you ask for our ethnobotany booklet during your next visit.

Plant use information is adapted from *Chumash Ethnobotany*, by Jan Timbrook (2007) with additional information from Calscape.org.



khaw (IC, M); tsa' (ytt); shtayit (Sm, Sa, K)

- Arroyo Willow (*Salix lasiolepis*)

This plant was boiled to create teas for fevers. Twigs/leaves used for water bottle stoppers, branches for fishing poles. Also used to build houses, beds, tools, and ladders in Chumash villages.



Shu'nay (Sm, Sa); shuna'y (M)

- Basket Bush/ Three-Leaved Sumac (*Rhus trilobata*)

Stems used to make seedbeater, open-twined and specialty baskets



mekjme'y (Sm, Sa, M); meqme'I (IC)

- Basket Rush (Juncus textilis)

The primary component of woven baskets. Also, could be used in bundles as brooms. Burned stems used to treat poison oak.



tsqoqo'n (M); sq'oyon (Sm); sq'o'yon (Sa)

- Big Berry Manzanita (Arctostaphylos glauca)

Fruits were dried and ground, mixed with water into pinole.



sekh (Sm, Sa, M)

- Bigpod Ceanothus (Ceanothus megacarpus)

White-flowered shrub branches used to make wedges for splitting canoe planks.

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'i'laq' (Sm); mo' (M)

- Big Saltbush (Atriplex lentiformis)

Made into a bedtime tea for colds. May have used burned ashes for lye in soap-making in the Mission Period. Coastal village of Simo'mo named "the saltbush patch."



qayas (Sm, IC, Sa, M)

- Blue Elderberry (*Sambucus mexicana*)

Wood used for bows, firesticks, flutes, clapper sticks, and bullroarers. Pith removed from branches and stems for tobacco containers. Flowers used in tea to treat colds and fever.



tiq 'itiq (Sm); tihi (M); tiqitiq (Sa)

- California Blackberry (*Rubus ursinus*)

Fruits were eaten fresh, and roots boiled for tea to treat dysentery.



tswana'atl 'ishup (M)

- California Buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum*)

Top of plant boiled into tea for rheumatism, menstrual regulation and stomach issues.



s'akht'utun 'iyukhnuts (Sm)

- California Fuchsia (*Epilobium canum*)

Dried, powdered leaves placed on wounds.



washtiq'oliq'ol (Sm, Sa); watiq'oniq'on (M)

- California Wild Rose (*Rosa californica*)

Fruit (rose hips) was eaten raw and strung on necklaces and earrings, primarily for children. Dried powdered rose petals use as powder for babies, and petals in tea used for colic.



**'akhtatapish (M); 'akhtayukhash (Sm, Sa);
wam (IC); chto (ytt)**

- Catalina Cherry (*Prunus ilicifolia* ssp. *lyonii*)

The island variety of holly-leaved cherry, pits of fruit were processed, leached and cooked somewhat similar to acorns, and molded into biscuit-like balls to eat with meats.



na' (Sm, Sa, K)

- Chamise (*Adenostoma fasciculatum*)

Hard wood used to make arrow foreshafts, clam gathering sticks and small game snares. Leaves used in tea for women's health.

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**makhsik' (Sm, K); 'alamakhwak'ay (Sa);
makhsik (M)**

- Chaparral Clematis (*Clematis lasiantha*)

Leaves rubbed on skin to treat sores.



tu' (Sm, Sa); chtu 'iqonon (M)

- Chaparral Honeysuckle (*Lonicera interrupta*)

Used like snowberry; bundled into brooms and brushes, used to remove cactus spines.



khman (Sm)

- Chaparral Mallow (*Malacothamnus fasciculatus*)

Cordage made from the bark for gathering bags.



pokh (Sm, Sa); shtakuk (IC, M); ts'isuyi' (ytt)

- Chaparral Yucca (*Yucca whipplei*)

The base/crown was roasted in underground pits and eaten. The leaves could be pounded to make fibers for cordage and sandals. Yucca needles were used for tattooing and ear piercing. Dried stalks useful as fire starters.



'ilepesh (Sm); 'i'lepesh (Sa); 'itepesh (M), l'ipi (ytt)

- Chia Sage (*Salvia columbiare*)

Seeds were toasted and ground into a fine flour and mixed with water into pinole or dried into cakes. Seeds could be rubbed into eye to remove particles and were given as offerings at ceremonies.

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tenech (Sm)

- Climbing Penstemon (*Keckiella cordifolia*)

Leaves were boiled into tea for colds or applied as poultice to sores.



**ku'w (Sm, Sa); kuwu (IC); tsuwu' (ytt);
'aku'w (K); kuw (M)**

- Coast Live Oak (*Quercus agrifolia*)

This evergreen oak (called Encino by the Spanish) was preferred for acorns, although it would require 2-3 leachings to prepare the acorn flour. Although the wood was not good for construction, it could be used for firewood, stirring paddles, bowls, shoots for the hoop in hoop-and-pole game, and twigs in baby cradles.



khi' (Sa); khi'il (M); khikhi' (Sm); tqi'I (ytt)

- Coast Prickly Pear (*Opuntia littoralis*)

Fruit was eaten fresh after removing sharp bristles. Red juice used as a paint pigment. Juice from the cactus pads used as a paint binder. Spines used for ear piercing and tattooing. Three native varieties present in Chumash territory



wewe'y (M); wewey (IC, Sa); tilho (ytt)

- Coastal Sagebrush (*Artemisia californica*)

Used for fire kindling, windbreaks around dance grounds. Leaves placed on head to relieve headache, boiled leaves treated poison oak. Made into tea for fevers, and coughs

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chatishwi 'i khus (M); puq' (Sm, Sa)

- Coffeeberry (*Rhamnus californica*)

Leaves rubbed on skin to remedy rheumatism. Boiled leaves treated poison oak rash. Bark was boiled for a laxative tea.



ya'i (Sm); yai (M)

- Deerweed (*Lotus scoparius*)

Brooms made from the brushy branches. Burned to dye Juncus for basket weaving. Used for thatching sweathouses.



woshk'o'loy (Sm); kiwikiwi (M)

- Ephedra (*Ephedra californica*)

Decoction used to wash cuts; tea used to purify blood, kidney and urinary disorders.



shakh (Sa, M, IC); shtemele (K); shtemelel (Sm), tqmimu' (ytt)

- Giant Wild Rye (*Elymus condensatus*)

Dried stems could be used to make arrow shafts, game counter sticks, cigarettes, or paintbrush handle. With a sharpened edge, the stem could be used as a knife. Sometimes used for thatching of the 'ap when tule not available.



sqa'yi'nu (Sm); sqayi'nu (Sa)

- Golden Currant (*Ribes aureum*)

Fruits were eaten fresh from this non-spiny plant.



chtu'ima (M); shtu'ama' (Sa); stu 'imá (Sm)

- Goldenrod (*Solidago californica*)

Brushes removed prickly pear spines. Tea used for coughs and colds and a wash or poultice for wounds.



stimiy 'iwi (Sm); tsiqun (Sa)

- Gooseberry (*Ribes speciosum*)

The fruits are edible and related to the California Current. These fruits were eaten fresh from the spiny plant.



washiko (Sm, Sa, M)

- Green Bark Lilac (*Ceanothus spinosis*)

Blue-flowered shrub wood used for fencing and offertory poles, as well as digging sticks, awls, abalone pry bars and wedges.



stiq shi'sha'w (M)

- Gum Plant (*Grindelia camporum*)

The fresh plant or decoction was applied to treat poison oak rash, skin disease or pulmonary trouble.



kiwikiw (M); woshk'o (Sm)

- Horsetail (*Equisetums* spp.)

High silica-content stems used as sandpaper for wooden bowls and arrows.



pakh (M); qimsh (Sa)

- Hummingbird Sage (*Salvia spathacea*)

Fresh leaves rubbed over the body to cure illness by sorcery.

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show (Sm, Sa, M); stu'yi' (K)

- Indian Tobacco (*Nicotiana quadrivalis*)

Smoked for curing purposes. Chewed with lime for social use. Dried leaves mixed added to water for a pre-dinner drink.



wi'li (M); wili (IC)

- Island Ironwood (*Lyonothamnus floribundas*)

Wood used for making harpoons, canoe paddles, knives and house posts on the islands.



**'akhtatapish (M); 'akhtayukhash (Sm, Sa);
wam (IC); chto (ytt)**

- Islay/Holly-Leaved Cherry (*Prunus ilicifolia*)

Pits of fruit were processed, leached and cooked somewhat similar to acorns, and molded into biscuit-like balls to eat with meats.

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walqaqsh (Sm, Sa, M)

- Laurel Sumac (*Malosma laurina*)

Berries were pounded, dried in the sun and eaten. Bark from root boiled in water and drank for treatment of dysentery.



'okhponush (Sa, Sm); 'usha'ak (M)

- Milkweed (*Asclepias fascicularis*)

Dried stems rubbed until fibrous and then twisted to make cordage. Milkweed juice congealed and used as chewing gum.



shilik' (Sm); shilik (Sa)

- Miner's Lettuce (*Claytonia perfoliata*)

Seeds were eaten similar to red maids while the tender leaves were eaten raw, like a salad.



pich (Sm)

- Mountain Mahogany (*Cercocarpus betuloides*)

Used for digging sticks, especially for harvesting brodiaea bulbs.



**molish (M); molush (Sm, Sa); qloqol (IC),
tpinusmu' (ytt)**

- Mugwort (*Artemisia douglasiana*)

Dried leaves were rubbed and twisted into a cone, placed on skin wound and burned to cauterize. Boiled or crushed leaves could relieve poison oak rash.



Shu' (Sm, Sa); twalilí (K); wita'y (M)

- Mule Fat (*Baccharis salicifolia*)

Used for firesticks. At the Santa Ynez River, stems were twisted together into a hoop for fish traps.



tu' (Sm, Sa); chtu 'iqonon (M)

- Snowberry (*Symphoricarpos mollis*)

Bundled into brooms and brushes.



**'akhwayish, kot' (Sa); tqupa' (ytt); su'nUk'
(Sm); choch, pash (M)**

- Soap Plant (*Chlorogalum pomeridianum*)

Bulb mixed with water to suds and wash clothes and hair. Bulb paste used to prepare hides. Crushed bulbs added to streams to paralyze fish for easy catching. Brushes made from the fibers around the bulb.



walqaqsh (Sm, Sa); shtoyho'os (M)

- Sugar Bush (*Rhus ovata*)
- Lemonadeberry (*Rhus integrifolia*)

Berries were pounded, dried in the sun and eaten.



mo'moy (Sm, IC); momoy (M, Sa)

- Toloache/Jimsonweed (*Datura wrightii*)

Roots were pounded, soaked in water and strained to make a hallucinogenic drink for shaman and initiation rituals.
Extremely toxic – do not consume!



qwe' (Sm, IC, Sa); qwe (M); ch'okoko, chmishi (ytt)

- Toyon/Christmas Berry (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*)

Berries were toasted and eaten, or dried in the sun and mashed. Wood used for fishing equipment, basketry awls, digging sticks, bowls, cups canoe pegs, gaming implements, arrows, offertory poles and more.

shikhwapsh 'i'ask'a (Sm); s'uwmo' 'oyoso (Sa); 'also'o (M)

- Western Vervain (*Verbena lasiostachys*)

Root boiled into a tea for fever. Leaves crushed into water used for hair washing.



**makhsik' (Sa, K); 'alamakhwak'ay (IC);
makhsik (M)**

- Western Virgin's Bower/Creek Clematis
(*Clematis ligusticifolia*)

Leaves rubbed on skin to treat sores.



khapshikh (Sm, Sa, M)

- White Sage (*Salvia apiana*)

Pounded leaves added to water for purgative. Leaves lined acorn granaries to keep pests away. Leaves burned for ceremony.



'akhiye'p (M)

- Woolly Bluecurls (*Trichostema lanatum*)

Used for women's menstrual disorders and as a disinfectant for skin conditions or sores.



**masteleq'a pistuk (Sa); steleq' 'a'emet (Sa);
yepunash (Sm, M)**

- Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*)

Plant boiled and liquid held in mouth to treat toothache. Plants mashed and applied to cuts and wounds.



‘alaqtaha (M)

- Yerba Buena (*Satureja douglasii*)

Boiled into a tea to treat worms, relieve colic and stomach aches, reduce fever and promote menstruation.



**‘onchochi (Sm, Sa); ch’elhe’ tsqono (ytt);
‘onchoshi (M)**

- Yerba Mansa (*Anemopsis californica*)

The root was boiled into tea for a wash of cuts, sores and rheumatism, and drunk to treat cough. The roots were chewed in ritual purification and protection ceremonies and ingested, along with the tea.



wishap’ (Sm); wishap (Sa, M)

- Yerba Santa (*Eriodictyon crassifolium*)

Leaves were boiled into a tea to treat colds, chest pain, cough and fever. Included in healer’s kits, and used to ensure victory in the game of shinny.