

The Etymologies of the Common Names of the Terrestrial Vegetation of the Fitzgerald Marine Reserve

By Tom Ciotti of the Friends of Fitzgerald Marine Reserve
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This compendium was totally inspired by Dr. Karen Kalumuck's compendium titled "The Terrestrial Vegetation of the Fitzgerald Marine Reserve". It should be read with and taken as a minor addendum to Dr. Kalumuck's compendium and, in some instances, with a grain of sea salt. The listing of etymologies corresponds to the order of listing of the vegetation in Dr. Kalumuck's compendium. In some of the listings I have included an interesting fact or two uncovered in researching these etymologies. Where available I have also included the Mutsun Ohlone name for the vegetation, taken from N. Warner, et al's Mutsun-English Dictionary (available online).

The Mutsun Ohlone names are phonetic translations and are pronounced according to the pronunciation guidelines set forth in the Dictionary's preface. I was unable to find Ramaytush Ohlone (the indigenous language spoken at FMR) names for any vegetation.

This compendium was done for the use and enjoyment of my fellow Friends of Fitzgerald Marine Reserve Volunteer Naturalists and in appreciation of their friendship, camaraderie, and dedication to preserving and protecting the Fitzgerald Marine Reserve.

HERBACEOUS PLANTS

BEACH SAGEWORT aka BEACH WORMWOOD

Sagewort is a combination of the Old English/Latin words sage, meaning "safe" or "healing", and refers to the medicinal use of the plant and wyrt, meaning "plant". Wormwood refers to the dark green oil produced by the plant which was used to kill intestinal worms. The Mutsun Ohlone name for this plant is hiinis.

BEACH STRAWBERRY

The origin of the word strawberry is uncertain. The most likely explanations are that it refers to the straw-like (at least to some observers) seeds that cover the berry surface or that it is a deviant pronunciation of "strewn berry" in that the plant has runners and spreads its berries about the ground. Other explanations are that the plant was mulched in straw during the winter and that English youth sold strawberries impaled on straw stalks.

Madam Tallien, a prominent figure at the court of the Emperor Napoleon, was famous for bathing in fresh strawberry juice. She reportedly used 22 pounds of strawberries per bath! Was she the first strawberry blonde?

BELLADONNA LILY aka NAKED LADY

"Belladonna" means beautiful lady in Italian and refers to my wife, Linda. "Lily" derives from the Latin word "lilium" meaning flower. "Naked" refers to the absence of leaves. The Mutsun Ohlone name for lily is waar.

BERMUDA BUTTERCUP aka SOURGRASS

The reference to Bermuda may come from the fact that the plant is native to Southern Africa and was introduced into North America via the Bermudas and Florida. The word buttercup likely refers to the color and shape of the flower. The term “sourgrass” derives from the taste of the plant. It is indeed sour tasting and the genus name for this plant, “oxalis”, is Latin meaning sour.

BIRD’S-FOOT TREFOIL

Birds-foot refers to the shape of the seed pods on the plant stock. Trefoil (trifoliate) refers to plants whose leaves have three leaflets. Actually the leaves of this plant have five leaflets but the central three are held above the other two, thus making the leaf appear to be trifoliate.

BRISTLY OXTONGUE

Bristly refers to the rough hooked bristles covering the stems and bracts of the plant. Oxtongue refers to the coarseness of the leaves and the pimple-like protrusions on the leaves. Ox tongues apparently are similarly coarse and pimples, but having never felt or even seen an ox tongue I can’t vouch for that.

BROADLEAF DOCK

The word “dock” appears to be derived from the Old English word “docce” which was likely the name for this plant and plants of similar appearance. So the name may simply mean a dock that has broad leaves. The Mutsun Ohlone name for dock is loopotok.

BUCK’S HORN PLANTAIN

The word “plantain” (pronounced plantin) is Old French and its root “planta” alludes to the sole of the foot, a reference to the plant’s flat leaves. Buck’s Horn refers to the shape of the leaves which to some observers look like antlers. The Mutsun Ohlone name for plantain is TooTolwa (see Warner, et al Dictionary for pronunciation of “T”).

BULL MALLOW

The word “mallow” is a modern pronunciation of the Middle English word “malwe” which derives from the Greek name, Malva, referring to the plant genus of which this plant is a species. I could not find any explanation as to why the word “bull” is part of this plant’s name. A guess is that it may indicate the plant is large and/or coarse.

BULL THISTLE

Thistle comes from an Old English word meaning prickly and this plant definitely is covered with lots of prickles. As in the case of Bull Mallow, I could find no explanation as to why “bull” is part of this name.

CALIFORNIA BEE PLANT

Yes, this plant's name comes from its ability to attract bees. But how does it do this?

My first guess (which was dead wrong) was that bees are attracted to the red color of the plant's flowers. Duh, bees don't see red because their visible spectrum relative to humans is skewed toward shorter (ultraviolet) wavelengths. So while they can't see red, they can see colors (which humans can't see) in the UV portion of the spectrum. Scientists believe that bees see patterns of UV light reflected from the flowers that help direct them to the plant's nectar. Nectar scent and a slight negative electrical charge carried by the flowers may also play roles in attracting bees. Does the electric charge turn them on?

CALIFORNIA BUR CLOVER

The word "clover" comes from the cloven (trifoliate) form of the leaves. The plant does have burs, which are the plant's seed capsules. The Mutsun Ohlone word for clover is muuren.

CALIFORNIA HEDGE NETTLE

The word "hedge" comes from the fact that old world species of this genus tended to grow in fence rows and along roadsides. It is called a nettle because it resembles Stinging Nettle, described infra. Unlike Stinging Nettle, it does not induce pain and irritation when touched.

CALIFORNIA HORKELIA aka CALIFORNIA HONEYDEW

This plant is a member of the rose family and is named after the 18th-19th century German botanist/physician Johann Horkel. The word "honeydew" is a combination of the words "honey" and "dew" and refers to the sticky sweet (like honey) substance found in small drops (like dew) on the plant's surface.

CALIFORNIA MANROOT aka WILD CUCUMBER

The word "manroot" refers to the tuberous root of the plant which is large enough to resemble the torso of a human. The plant is a member of the cucumber family although the tuber of this species is rather bitter. Interestingly, over time the more edible cucumber species' reputation as a food has varied, going back-and-forth from cherished to considered toxic. "Wild" denotes that this plant is in its natural state and has not been cultivated.

CALIFORNIA PHACELIA aka ROCK PHACELIA

The word Phacelia derives from a Greek word meaning cluster or bundle, a reference to how the plant's flowers are packed tightly. The term "rock" refers to the plant's preference for rocky soil.

CALIFORNIA POPPY

This is the California State flower, designated as such in 1903. Its name is derived from its genus name "Papaver", the Old English word "popig", and the Latin root "pap" meaning "to swell", perhaps in reference to the swell of the plant's flowers.

CALLA LILY

The Greek word “Calla” means beautiful. And the plant’s flower fits that bill! The flower is associated with purity, faithfulness, and holiness and is thus often seen in depictions of the Virgin Mary. It is also associated with rebirth and resurrection and is often included in Easter bouquets. See supra for the word “Lily”.

CANARY ISLAND IVY

This plant’s origin is the Canary Islands in the Atlantic Ocean. The word “ivy” is of Old English and Latin origin and means “vine”. The Mutsun Ohlone word for ivy is nissi.

CAPE IVY

This plant’s origin is in South Africa and is named for the Cape of Good Hope. See supra for the word “ivy”.

CATCHWEED BEDSTRAW aka GOOSE GRASS

This plant is so named because its leaves and stems are covered with fine hook-like hairs that readily adhere to (or catch onto) clothing or fur. Masses of this plant were used as a mattress filler (as bedstraw) because the individual plants of the mass cling to each other and do not mat down easily. In modern times this plant is often called the Velcro plant.

This plant was also called goose grass because it was fed to geese and had parts that some imaginative observers believed looked like the foot of a goose.

CHILEAN SEA FIG

The scientific species name for this plant is the Latin word “chilensis” meaning “from Chile”. This is undoubtedly the basis for the “Chilean” part of its common name even though the plant is probably native to Southern Africa. It does grow by the seashore. Its leaves and fruit are edible and the former may resemble figs to the imaginative observer. But don’t eat too much, because large portions are reported to act as a laxative!

COASTAL TARWEED

This plant grows near the sea coast. The word “tarweed” derives from the fragrant black oil that exudes from the plant’s leaves. The Mutsun Ohlone word for tarweed is yarkas.

COMMON CHICKWEED

The word “chickweed” derives from the fact that birds, especially chickens, love to feed on this plant. The word “common” likely means that the plant is widespread.

COMMON DAISY

This plant’s name derives from an Old English word for its flower which meant “day’s eye” because the flower opens at daybreak and closes at night.

COMMON DANDELION

This name derives from the Greek name for this plant's genus which meant "lion's teeth", perhaps in reference to the jagged edges of its leaves. The French name for this genus is "dent-de-lion" meaning "tooth of the lion". The word "dandelion" may derive from a deviant pronunciation of that French name.

COMMON IVY

See supra for the meanings of "common" and "ivy".

COMMON SILVERWEED aka SILVERWEED CINQUEFOIL

The undersides of this plant's leaves are covered with silky white hairs that give the leaves a silvery appearance. The word "Cinquefoil" denotes that the plant's flowers have five ("cinq" means five in French) petals.

COMMON VETCH

The word "vetch" derives from Old English/Latin words meaning "to bind" and may refer to the tendency of plants of the vetch genus to attach to and climb on supporting structures.

MILKVETCH aka NUTTALL'S MILKVETCH

See supra for the meaning of "vetch". Even though this plant is known to be poisonous to livestock (another name for this plant is locoweed because it makes livestock loco when they eat it), some people believe that feeding it to goats results in improved goat milk production. The word "Nuttall's" likely refers to the 18th-19th century English botanist Thomas Nuttall.

COMMON YARROW

The word "yarrow" derives from similar sounding names for the plant in Old English and Old German. The root for these names is the same as the root for the word "yellow". Light yellow is the common color of this plant's flowers.

The scientific name for this plant's genus, *Achillea*, is named after the Greek warrior Achilles who used plants of this genus to staunch the wounds of his soldiers at the siege of Troy.

COTTONBATTLING PLANT aka COTTONBATTLING CUDWEED

The term "cottonbattling" may refer to the use of the cotton-like tops of the flowers being used by indigenous peoples as stuffing or batting. The word "cudweed" is perhaps an alteration of the words "cottonweed" or "cutweed", the latter referring to the plant's use to treat cuts and chafings.

Plants that were once thought to be suitable to feed cows that had lost the ability to chew the cud were called "cudweeds".

CREVICE ALUMROOT

Members of the Alumroot plant family often grow in rock crevices. The word "alumroot" may refer to the astringency of the plant's fleshy root. Alum is a compound used as an astringent.

CUT-LEAVED CRANE'S BILL aka WILD GERANIUM

The leaves of this plant are deeply divided or "cut". The fruit seed is considered by imaginative observers to look like the long beak of a crane. Interestingly "geranium" is the diminutive of the Greek word "geranos", meaning crane.

DOUGLAS IRIS

This plant takes its name from the Greek word "iris" meaning "rainbow". Iris is also the name of the Greek goddess of the rainbow who used the rainbow as a bridge to bring messages from the Gods to mankind.

This plant was first described by the 19th century botanist, David Douglas, in Monterey, California.

DOVE'S-FOOT CRANE'S BILL

"Dove's-Foot" refers to the shape of the leaves, which those imaginative observers think resemble a dove's foot. See supra for the derivation of "Crane's Bill".

DUNE TANSY

The plant grows on dunes. "Tansy" derives from the scientific name for the plant's genus, "Tanacetum", which means "immortal". Apparently this plant is extremely hardy and resilient.

DWARF CHECKERMALLOW. aka WILD HOLLYHOCK

See supra for the meaning of the word "mallow". I was unable to find an explanation of the use of "checker" in the name which is puzzling because "checker" appears in the names of other plants or plant parts. A possible explanation (of my own) is that the checkermallow is host to the checkered skipper butterfly.

The word "hollyhock" is believed to derive from the Anglo-Saxon term "holy-hoc", the term "hoc" being a synonym for "mallow". Use of the term "holy" may refer to the medicinal properties of the plant or its association with fertility.

FAIRY CRASSULA aka CAPE PROVINCE PYGMYWEED

"Crassula" is a Latin word meaning thick and is believed to refer to the plant's leaves. The word "fairy" may refer to the spent flowers of the plant which, at least to some people, look like little fairies.

Cape Province is another name for the Cape of Good Hope and refers to the native origin of the plant. The term "pygmyweed" derives from the fact that many species of the Crassula genus are quite small.

FAREWELL TO SPRING

This plant's name comes from the fact that it blooms in late spring to summer. Its genus name, Clarkia, refers to Captain William Clark, leader of the famous Lewis and Clark Expedition.

SKUNKWEED

This plant's name refers to its mephitic (skunk-like) odor.

FEATHERWEED

The term "feather" in this plant's name refers to the feathery appearance of the plant's seed head when the seed begins to shed.

FENNEL

The plant name derives from the Old English word "fenol" which in turn came from the Latin word "feniculum" the diminutive of a word meaning "hay".

In medieval times fennel was used with St. John's wort to ward off witchcraft.

FRINGE CUPS

The term "fringe" refers to the lacy petals of the flowers. The term "cup" refers to the shape of the flowers.

FRINGED WILLOWHERB

The flowers of this plant are fringed. The term "willowherb" derives from the resemblance of its leaves to those of willow trees.

GIANT VETCH

See supra regarding the word "vetch". This plant or some part of it is apparently large in relation to other members of the vetch genus.

GREATER PERIWINKLE

The Old English name for this plant is "parvink" and "periwinkle" is likely an alteration thereof. The Latin name for the plant is "pervinca" derived from the Latin verb "pervincire" meaning to bind or entwine. This plant indeed binds and entwines.

The periwinkle snail is a resident of the FMR tide pools. While its name is identical to the plant's name, it has an entirely different derivation. The snail's name is derived from a combination of the Old English words "pinel" from the Latin word "pina" meaning "mussel" and "wincel" meaning "spiral shell".

GUM PLANT

The term "gum" refers to the sticky secretion from the plant.

HENDERSON'S ANGELICA

The term "Angelica" probably refers to the pleasing (angelic) scent of the plant. The plant may be named in honor of the famous 19th-20th century Northwest botanist, Louis Fourniquet Henderson. The Mutsun Ohlone name for Angelica is kuutis.

HOOKER'S EVENING PRIMROSE

The term "primrose" is believed to be a combination of the words "prime" from the Latin "primus" meaning first and "rose" referring to the plant's flower. This plant is one of the first to bloom in the Spring. The word "evening" comes from the fact that the plant's flowers open at dusk. Plants that flower at night are typically pollinated by moths. The plant is named in honor of Sir William Jackson Hooker, the Director of the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew in the mid-19th century.

HORSEWEED aka FLEABANE

I was unable to find any explanation for the presence of the term "horse" in this plant's name. Perhaps those imaginative observers feel the plant or some part of it resembles a horse's tail. It might also refer to the large size and coarse appearance of the plant.

The name "fleabane" comes from the use of this plant as a flea retardant.

IRIS

See supra for the derivation of "iris".

MUSK STORK'S BILL aka WHITESTEM FILAREE

This plant emits a smell resembling musk. Its seed head resembles the shape of a stork's bill.

The central vein (stem) of this plant's leaf is white. The word "filaree" is believed to come from the Spanish word "afiler" meaning "pin" as in pinning cloth together. In this regard the plant's seed is said to resemble a type of pin that was used to close capes at the neckline.

NASTURTIUM

This name comes from the Latin word "nasitortium", meaning "nose twist". At least to some people the odor of this plant is unpleasant, causing them to twist their nose.

NEW ZEALAND SPINACH

This plant is native to New Zealand and, when young, tastes like spinach.

NIGHTSHADE

This name was coined because some of the plants in the family to which this plant belongs prefer to grow in shady areas and others flower at night.

PACIFIC ASTER

"Aster" is a Greek word meaning "star" and its use in this plant's name refers to the star-shape of the plant's flowers. The Greek goddess Asteria was the goddess of falling stars. According to legend Asteria became so sad when she failed to see a falling star that she wept and where her tears fell to earth these flowers grew.

PACIFIC SANICLE

The word “sanicle” derives from the Latin word “sanicula”, the diminutive of the Latin word “sanare” meaning “to heal” and refers to the use of the plant to treat wounds and snake bites.

PALE DEWPLANT aka ICE PLANT

The term “dewplant” refers to the small drops of liquor-like dew on its leaves even when the plant is exposed to the sun. The drops are also called sundew. The flowers of this plant are a lighter pink than the flowers of related species and hence referred to as “pale”.

The name “ice plant” comes from the little hairs on its stems which reflect light and glisten like ice.

PAMPAS GRASS

This plant is named for the Pampas plain of Argentina where this grass is endemic.

PEARLY EVERLASTING

This plant’s name derives from the pearly color of the plant’s bracts which surround the plant’s flowers. The bracts retain their pearly color even when dried, hence the term “everlasting”.

PERENNIAL RYE GRASS

The word “rye” is Old English name for this grass and also the edible grain thereof.

SOAPROOT

This plant is so named because indigenous peoples used its root to make soap.

The Mutsun Ohlone name for soaproot is torow.

PINEAPPLE WEED aka WILD CHAMOMILE

The word “pineapple” appears in this name because the scent of the crushed leaves of the plant resembles the scent of pineapple.

“Chamomile” derives from the Greek word meaning “earth apple” and apparently refers to the apple (or maybe pineapple)-like smell of its flowers.

POISON HEMLOCK

This plant is poisonous. The word “hemlock” is the Old English name for the plant and is of unknown origin, although its root “hem” in Old English refers to poison. Interestingly, the Latin name for this plant’s family “Umbellifer” means “vertigo”, one of the symptoms of hemlock poisoning. Umbellifers have a somewhat rounded (umbrella-shaped) flower head.

The chemical compound coniine makes this plant poisonous. This is referenced in this plant’s scientific name *Conium maculatum*.

This plant has some look-alikes such as yarrow and Queen Anne’s Lace which are not poisonous. A distinguishing characteristic of poison hemlock is its smooth stems which often have purple colored areas. Both yarrow and Queen Anne’s Lace have relatively hairy stems with no purple color. One reference I found humorously suggested that with respect to Queen Anne’s Lace this distinction could be remembered by the phrase “The Queen has hairy legs”!

Yes, this plant did in Socrates.

There is an evergreen tree named “hemlock”. It is not poisonous.

The Mutsun Ohlone generic name for poisonous plants is Suututuk.

RIBWORT PLANTAIN

See supra regarding the words “wort” and “plantain”. The term “rib” comes from the plant’s long, narrow ribbed leaves.

SAND SPURRY

The word spurry may refer to the appearance and formation of the plant’s leaves. “Spurry” refers to a radiating form like the points on the rowels of a cowboy’s spurs.

SCARLET PIMPERNEL

“Scarlet” refers to the color of the plant’s flowers. “Pimpernel” derives from similar Old French and Latin words meaning “pepper-like” and likely refers to the resemblance of the plant’s fruits to peppercorns.

“The Scarlet Pimpernel” is the code name of the hero, Sir Percy Blakeney, of the 1905 novel “The Scarlet Pimpernel” set in late 18th century France. Sir Percy’s written communications to the French government were signed with a depiction of this plant’s flower.

SEASIDE BUCKWHEAT

“Buckwheat” is an alteration of the word “beechwheat” and refers to the triangular seeds of this plant which resemble the larger seeds of the beech tree and, like wheat, are ground to make a flour.

SEASIDE DAISY

See supra for the derivation of the word “daisy”.

SEASIDE WOOLY SUNFLOWER aka LIZARD TAIL

“Wooly” refers to the near white, wool-like appearance of the undersides of the plant’s leaves. The word “sunflower” comes from the fact that the flowers of these plants turn towards the sun, a phenomenon called “phototropism”.

The term “lizard tail” refers to the shape of the plant’s leaf, which to those imaginative observers resembles the tail of a short-tailed lizard.

SEA THRIFT

This plant grows in seaside areas. The name thrift comes from the fact that it can grow in really harsh places, in shallow and nutrient poor soil, with very little fresh water available.

A depiction of this plant appeared on the reverse side of the British threepence coin from 1937-1952.

SHEEP SORREL

The word “sheep” in this plant’s name probably comes from the use of this plant as livestock forage. The word “sorrel” derives from similar French and German words meaning “sour” and refers to this plant’s taste.

SILVER BEACHWEED

This plant grows on beaches and is a member of the ragweed family. The term “silver” refers to the silver green color of its leaves.

SMALL FLOWERED CATCHFLY

The word “catchfly” comes from this plant’s sticky stems which catch insects.

SMALL MELILOT

The word “mellilot” is a combination of the word “mel” meaning “honey” referring to the sweet taste of the plant and the word “lotus” which is of Greek/Latin origin and refers to various plants including clover. This plant is often referred to as “sweet clover”. It is a favorite of bees.

SOW THISTLE

the term “sow” refers to this plant’s attractiveness to pigs. The term “thistle” refers to the similarity of its leaves to those of young thistle plants.

When cut this plant exudes a milky latex and in the past it was fed to lactating sows (and nursing human mothers too!) in the belief that it would increase milk production.

SPREADING RUSH

I could not find the origin of this name. However, rushes are found near bodies of water and the name may refer to rushing waters.

STINGING NETTLE

The term “nettle” likely derives from a similar Anglo/Saxon word meaning “needle”. This plant has fine hairs bearing chemical irritants such as formic acid which, when touched, act like needles or stingers and cause skin irritation and rash.

The Mutson Ohlone name for nettle is tawhana.

STINGING PHACELIA aka STINGING SCORPIONWEED

See supra regarding the name Phacelia. The term “stinging” refers to the fact that the stems and leaves of the plant have highly irritating hairs that cause vesicular dermatitis similar to that caused by stinging nettle and poison oak. The alternative name “SCORPIONWEED” refers to the plant’s flower clusters which grow in a tightly curled formation that appear to the imaginative observer to resemble a scorpion’s tail.

STRIPED TREASUREFLOWER

The flowers of many members of this genus have radiating stripes on their petals. The genus name for this plant is *Gazania*, and while its derivation is not relevant to the name treasureflower, the Greek/Latin word “gaza” means treasure and is the basis for this plant’s name.

Flowers of the *Gazania* genus are light-sensitive and close at night or on particularly cloudy days, a behavior called “nyctinasty”.

SUBTERRANEAN CLOVER

See supra for the word “clover”. The word subterranean appears in this plant’s name because its seed matures in a bur below the soil surface. Underground seed development is uncommon and is called “geocarp”.

SUN CUP

This plant’s name likely refers to the yellow color of its flowers and the cup-shape of its flowers. It is a member of the evening primrose family (see supra) and many members of this family are commonly called “sun cups”.

THREE CORNERED GARLIC aka WILD ONION

This plant smells like garlic and its stem and base of the leaf blade are triangular (three cornered) in cross-section.

The word “onion” refers to the bulb of the plant which is edible and apparently has an onion taste. See supra regarding the word “wild”.

The Mutsun Ohlone name for wild onion is uuner.

VARIED LUPIN

The word “varied” refers to the multicolored flowers of the plant. “Lupin” or “lupine” is the name of the genus of this plant and is likely of uncertain origin. Some believe it may derive from the Latin word “lupinus” meaning “wolfish” and was applied to this plant in the mistaken belief that it ravenously exhausted the soil of nutrients. Another explanation is that wolves are associated with sheep killing and members of this plant’s genus are particularly poisonous to sheep.

WESTERN BLUE-EYED GRASS

This plant’s flower suggests a blue eye with a yellow iris. From a distance a field of blue-eyed grass can appear spotted with blue eyes. Its leaves are similar to grass.

WHITE CLOVER

The flower of this clover is white. See supra for the word “clover”.

WHITE RAMPING-FUMITORY

This plant’s flowers are white with purple tips. The word “ramping” refers to the tendency of the plant to creep up on supports. The family name of this plant, “Fumaria” or “Fumitory” means “smoke of the earth”. Some believe this phrase refers to the smoke-like smell of some species or smoke rising from the ground because of the legend that plants of this family were created by vapors rising from the earth. Others believe this phrase refers to the diffuse foliage of some species which may resemble smoke.

WILD RADISH aka JOINTED CHARLOCK

“Radish” is Old English meaning “root”. The root of this plant is edible and has a radish taste.

The plant is quite branched and the word “jointed” may refer to that structure. I was unable to determine the origins of the word “charlock” beyond it being used to refer to a family of cruciferous (flowers in the shape of a cross) plants.

WILLOW DOCK

The leaves of this plant resemble the leaves of willow trees. See supra for the word “dock”.

YELLOW SAND VERBENA

The flowers of this plant are yellow and it grows in coastal sandy soil. This plant is not a member of the Verbena (Vervain) genus and is mis-named in this respect. There are, however, striking similarities between the development and arrangement of its flowers and the development and arrangement of the flowers of members of the Verbena genus. That similarity is the basis for this plant being called a Verbena.

TREES

ARROYO WILLOW

“Arroyo” means “watercourse” and these plants prefer to grow near water, such as streams or lakes. The word “Willow” is similar to the Old English name for this family of trees.

The Mutsun Ohlone name for this tree is tarah.

According to Celtic custom touching or knocking on the willow tree helped ward off bad luck. This custom gave rise to the phrase “knock on wood”. These trees were associated with warding off evil spirits in the belief of indigenous peoples.

Harry Potter’s spell casting wand is made from willow wood.

BLACK LOCUST

This tree’s name derives from the appearance of its seed pods. The pods apparently resemble the appearance of the insect named locust and are dark and toxic, hence “black”.

CANARY ISLAND PALM

This tree is native to the Canary Islands located in the eastern Atlantic Ocean. The word “palm” derives from the Latin name for these trees, “palma”, meaning “palm of the hand”, with its leaves resembling the fingers of a hand.

COAST REDWOOD

This tree is the State tree of California, designated as such in 1937. It is native to the Pacific Coast of North America. The term “redwood” refers to its beautifully colored pink or reddish heart wood.

The Mutsun Ohlone name for this tree is hop.

EUCALYPTUS aka BLUE GUM

The name “Eucalyptus” derives from the Ancient Greek words “eu” meaning good, well true, beautiful and “kalypto” meaning cover or conceal referring to the operculum covering the flower buds.

“Blue” refers to the blue hue of the juvenile foliage of the tree. “Gum” refers to exudate (called “kino”) released from the tree when its bark is damaged.

KARO

This tree is native to New Zealand. “Karo” is the Māori name for this tree.

MONTEREY CYPRESS

This tree is native to the Monterey, California area. “Cypress “ comes from the Latin word for tree.

MONTEREY PINE

This tree is native to three limited areas in California, one of which is in Monterey County. “Pine” comes from the Latin name, *Pinus*, for the genus to which this tree belongs. The Mutsun Ohlone name for pine is hireeni.

PLUM

This name derives from similar words in several ancient languages, all of which refer to the tree and its fruit.

SWEET CHESTNUT

“Chestnut” derives from the Old English name “chesten nut” for this tree. This term is used to describe both the tree and its nut, the latter being edible and pleasing (sweet) to the taste.

SHRUBS AND BUSHES

AUSTRALIAN TEA TREE

The explorer, Captain Cook, named this tree-like plant in reference to his observation that the indigenous people of Australia brewed a healing tea from its leaves.

CALIFORNIA BLACKBERRY

This plant is named after the black fruit or “berry” it produces. It is a species of the genus *Rubus*, many members of which produce such berries. This plant is the species that grows in California. A non-native species, Himalayan Blackberry, is also found at FMR. The stems of the native species are round whereas those of the non-native are edged. Also, the undersides of the non-native’s leaves appear white relative to the light green undersides of the native’s leaves.

The Mutsun Ohlone name for blackberry fruit may be eenena. The Mutsun Ohlone name for the blackberry bush may be reTeeTih.

COASTAL BUSH LUPINE

The word “bush” derives from similar words in many ancient languages that generally mean “many-stemmed woody plant”. See *supra* for the derivation of “lupine” or “lupin”.

COYOTE BUSH

The basis for the use of the word “coyote” in this plant’s name is uncertain. The most plausible explanation is that it refers to the plant’s female flowers in mature seed which look as if a passing coyote left tufts of its hair on the bush. The male plant’s flowers do not look like this and this is how you can distinguish the genders of this plant. “Coyote” is also the name of a spiritual figure in the mythology of the indigenous people. This figure was regarded as a “trickster” and some believe that the use of “coyote” in this plant’s name refers to the many “tricks” this plant has to survive, such as its extensive root system and its waxy leaves which resist desiccation and are fire resistant.

FRENCH BROOM

The word “broom” appears in its name because in the past its upright, dense mass of ascending stems were cut and made into floor brooms.

GLOSSY ABELIA

The leaves of this plant are glossy in appearance. It is named in honor of the the 18th-19th century English naturalist and physician Dr. Clark Abel.

LATE COTONEASTER

This plant flowers in late Spring. The word “cotoneaster” derives from the Latin word “cotoneum” meaning “quince” and the suffix -aster meaning “resembling”, leading me to surmise that the fruit of this plant may resemble quince.

LAURUSTINUS

The leaves of this tree resemble those of the bay tree (*Laurus nobilis*). The Latin word “tinus” is said to be the ancient name for plants in general.

MIRROR BUSH aka TAUPATA

The word “mirror” refers to the glossy, reflective (mirror-like) leaves of this plant.

This plant is native to New Zealand and “Taupata” is the Māori name for it.

NGAIO aka MOUSEHOLE TREE

This plant is native to New Zealand and “Ngaio” is the Māori name for it.

The word “mousehole” derives from the scientific name for this bush, *Myoporum laetum*. “Myoporum” derives from the the combination of the Ancient Greek words “mys” (“myo “ in new Latin) meaning mouse and “porum” meaning pore (small hole).

CALIFORNIA COFFEEBERRY

Both the foliage and berries of this plant resemble those of the coffee plant. Also, its roasted seeds can be used to make a caffeine-free coffee substitute.

The Mutsun Ohlone name for coffeeberry is puruuriS.

ORANGE BUSH MONKEYFLOWER aka STICKY MONKEY FLOWER

The flowers of this plant have a beautiful orange color. Its leaves are sticky. Its flowers resemble the face of a monkey to the imaginative observer.

RED BERRIED ELDER

The berries of this plant are red. The berries are reported to be edible when cooked and poisonous when eaten raw. On first seeing this name I thought “elder” referred to age. Wrong! The word “elder” comes from the Anglo-Saxon word “aeld” meaning “fire”. In the past the twigs of this plant were used for kindling or hollowed out and used as a kind of bellows to start fires. Elder wood was also used to start fires by friction. Hollowed out twigs were used by indigenous people as pipe stems. The related blue berried elder species is reportedly more edible than the red berried species.

Folklore taught that elders served as a gathering place for witches. So don’t linger by these plants.

The Mutsun Ohlone name for elderberry is hitna. The Mutsun Ohlone word “cisna” may refer to elder wood.

RED CLAWS

The flowers of this plant are red and to the imaginative observer resemble claws, especially lobster claws.

RED-FLOWERING CURRANT

The flowers of this plant are red. The fruit of this plant resemble small grapes. Dried small grapes are called currants. The word “currant” is believed to be a corruption of the word “Corinthe” which was the name of an Ancient Greek city that served as a port of origin of such dried grapes for centuries.

GIANT VIPERS-BUGLOSS aka TOWER OF JEWELS aka ECHIUM

This plant can grow to great height—like a giant! The shape of the plant’s nutlets resemble a viper’s head and the forking at the end of its flower resembles a viper’s tongue. The word bugloss is a corruption of the Greek word “bouglossos” meaning “cow’s tongue” and refers to the shape and texture of the plant’s leaves.

The name “tower of jewels” likely comes from the prodigious height of the plant and, when in bloom, its covering of beautiful flowers.

The name “Echium” is Latin and derives from the Greek word “echis” meaning, of course, “a viper”.

As expected humans indeed used this plant as an antidote for snake bites, reportedly with some success!

TREE MALLOW

This plant has a tree-like appearance. Indeed, its species name is “arborea”, a Latin word meaning “tree-like”. See supra regarding the word “mallow”.

PRIMITIVE PLANTS AND PHOTOSYNTHETIC FRIENDS

COMMON BRACKEN

“Bracken” derives from Old Norse words meaning “fern”.

GREAT HORSETAIL

This plant somewhat resembles a horse’s tail. Its scientific name, *Equisteum* derives in part from the Latin word “*equus*”, meaning “horse”.

The spacing pattern of the whorls of this plant are reported to have inspired the development of logarithms.

When cremated the resulting plant ash is nearly pure silicic acid. The ash was used to scour pewter and this plant was also called Pewterwort and Scouring Rush.

LACE LICHEN

“Lace” refers to the lace-like pattern of this lichen. The word “lichen” comes from similar Latin and Greek words meaning “tree moss”. Lichens are composed of a fungus in a symbiotic association with an alga or cyanobacterium. This lichen is the State Lichen of California, effective January 1, 2016.

The Mutsun Ohlone name for lichen appears to be *sassuwe*. This word also appears to mean moss.

MOSS

This name is derived from similar words from many Old World languages, all used as the name for this organism.

TRENTEPOHLIA AUREA

The famous taxonomist, Carl Linnaeus, assigned the name *Trentepohlia* to the genus of which this green alga is a species. The word “*aurea*” is Latin and means “golden”, which could describe the orange color of this alga.

This alga is found worldwide.

There are about 40 species of the genus, many serving as phycobionts in lichens.

The Mutsun Ohlone name for algae is *hilok*.

WESTERN SWORDFERN

The word “swordfern” is a combination of the word sword, referring to the shape of its leaflets, and the Old English word “fern” used as the name of plants having feathery fronds.

WESTERN JUMBO GYM

The scientific name for this mushroom is *Gymnopilus junonius*. The prefix “gym-“ means “naked” and refers to the bald cap of the mushroom. The prefix “juno-“ refers to the Roman goddess Juno, the wife (and also sister) of Jupiter. Juno was reported to be rather statuesque, a really jumbo female!

The Mutsun Ohlone name for mushroom is aasakwa.

“That’s All Folks”

This phrase was (st)uttered by Porky Pig at the end of most Looney Tunes cartoons.

The Mutsun Ohlone name for pig is kooci.

