

# OSOBERRY



Gorge Waterway Action Society



## Osoberry (*Oemeleria cerasiformis*)

### OVERVIEW:

### Edible Nature

Osoberry is identified as a shrub or small tree with narrow, oval, pale green, soft, smooth leaves. The leaves' edges tend to be rolled over. The flowers are greenish-white in colour, and hang in clusters before the leaves emerge. These flowers develop into small plum-like fruits that are pink to deep blue in colour with a white dusting. The fruits are edible but have a bitter taste to them unless cooked. Seeds should be placed back into the soil during this process.



- General Information: The Osoberry or Bird Cherry is the only member of its genus worldwide. The Osoberry is often the first native deciduous shrub to flower in late winter, making it an important early nectar source. It is a fast growing, deciduous, short-lived, perennial shrub or tree growing 2-5 metres tall.
- Habitat: Common to the southwest of British Columbia at lower elevations.
- Horticultural Uses: Popularly used in restoration, Osoberry is a native species with a wide range of tolerances. It is an easy to grow species with rapid growth, shade tolerant and moisture regimes that resists erosion.

## Indigenous Uses of Osoberry

The 'plums' of the Osoberry are often compared in flavour to cherries or watermelons. When underripe, the plums are a little dry and bitter, but they become increasingly sweeter once they ripen. The bitter note does slightly remain once ripe which is why the Indigenous populations typically cook the plums to dissipate the bitterness and mix them with other berries. Osoberrries were eaten in relatively small quantities by Indigenous peoples. They were often cooked or dried. Twigs and bark were used in various medicinal purposes.



## Species Uses of Osoberry

Osoberry flowers early in the season during late winter making it a highly important native species for nectar. Hummingbirds, moths and butterflies, native bees and other pollinators are attracted to their green-white flowers. The flowers attract birds, such as Cedar Waxwings, to forage on the plentiful berries. Berries and shrubbery are also eaten by a variety of mammals, either as browse or berries.

Best be quick or the birds will eat them all!!



## Osoberry Neature Question

Question:  
What do the leaves of the Osoberry smell like?

Answer:  
The leaves are noted to smell similar to cucumber.

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