

THIMBLEBERRY



Gorge Waterway Action Society



Thimbleberry (*Rubus parviflorus*)

OVERVIEW:

Edible Nature

Thimbleberry is identified as a deciduous shrub with upright stems ranging from 1-3 metres. New shoots have green bark that turns reddish-brown and flaky over time. Maple-like soft leaves with five fuzzy lobes range along the stems. Five-petaled white flowers produce red raspberry-like berries. The berries and new green stalks are edible. Be sure to get a taste of these delicious berries before the birds do and ensure you spread the seeds from the berries around.



- General Information: Thimbleberry is a deciduous rhizomatous shrub growing 1-3 metres tall that forms dense thickets. The green deciduous leaves measure 25cm across and are soft, fuzzy, and maple-like 3-7 lobes. They have large white flowers (4cm) with five petals that produce red raspberry-like fruits which are sweet and delicious. Unlike other *Rubus* (Rose) species, Thimbleberry stalks does not contain thorns.
- Habitat: Thimbleberry shrubs are found in cool climates. They are often found in open areas such as clearings, roadsides, and open forests in low to mid-level elevations.
- Horticultural Uses: Thimbleberry is often used in restoration of disturbed sites due to its aggressive natural regeneration. It is used to revegetate areas and is often used in riparian restoration.

Indigenous Uses of Thimbleberry

Thimbleberries were harvested and eaten by all Northwest Coast people. The berries are coarse and seedy, lending to the berries often being dried. They were often dried and eaten with smoked clams. The berries were often collected before they ripened and stored in cedar-bark bags until they ripened. They were often steamed, eaten fresh or dried in the same manner as Salal berries. The berries were often mixed together with for superior flavours. The new green stems (shoots) were collected in bulk and eaten raw. The leaves were often used to fashion berry containers. Certain Indigenous groups owned, pruned, and otherwise managed productive patches of Thimbleberries for harvests.



Species Uses of Thimbleberry

Bears and birds alike love to eat the juicy berries off of Thimbleberry shrubs. Native bees and other pollinators eat the hidden nectar from deep within the rose-like flowers. American Robins, Northwestern Crows and Swainson's Thrushes consume the berries and spread the seeds far and wide. Songbirds further use the dense thickets as nesting habitat.

Be sure to find a thicket to try the berries before the birds eat them all then sit and listen near the shrubs to hear the songbirds sing!



Thimbleberry Neature Question

Question:

Do Thimbleberry stems have thorns?

Answer:

Unlike other *Rubus* (Rose) species, Thimbleberries do not have harsh thorns that will cause prickles while harvesting.

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