



Gorge Waterway Action Society



Kinnikinnick (*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*)

OVERVIEW:

Edible Nature

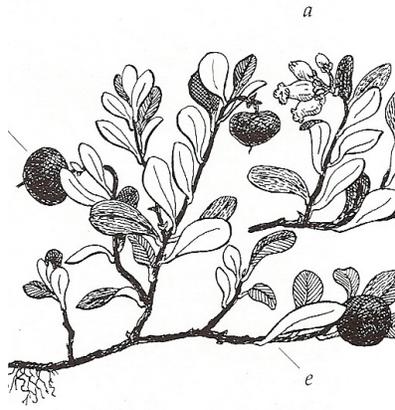
Kinnikinnick is identified as a small trailing shrub that forms freely rooting mats. Its leathery, evergreen leaves are dark green, shiny, and petite, with smooth edges. Tiny, pink, somewhat waxy and lantern-shaped flowers change from light pink, to red, to 'miniature apple' like scarlet-red berries. These berries along with the leaves are edible. The berries have a large seed inside that can be placed back into the soil for future Kinnikinnick to sprout.



- General Information: Kinnikinnick, also called Bearberry, is a small trailing evergreen shrub with dark green leaves and bright red berries. The berries are identifiable as miniature apples with a single large hard seed inside. The species blooms in early May and June. The blossoms produce berries that stay on the plant throughout the winter.
- Habitat: Kinnikinnick is found on exposed sites containing sandy soils. This often means it is found on rocky slopes. These slopes are often associated with dry forest areas throughout much of British Columbia.
- Horticultural Uses: Kinnikinnick is often used to stabilize sandy soils. It is used in restoration as a beautification plant and stabilizing ground cover. It creates a thick protective mat of evergreen vegetation.

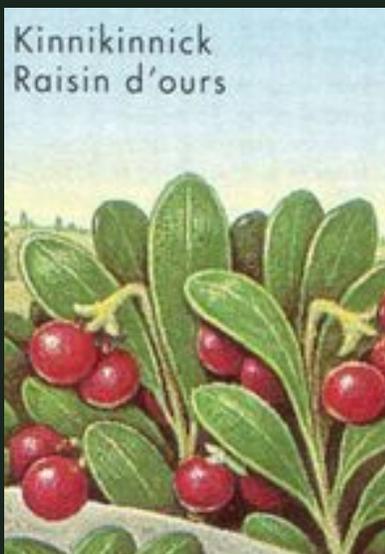
Indigenous Uses of Kinnikinnick

The leaves and berries of the Kinnikinnick shrub are edible. Due to its small stature, harvesters often cut small sections of multiple plants to preserve their health. In these sections there were stems, leaves and berries. The leaves were often smoked in a sacred pipe, carrying the smoker's prayers to the Great Spirit. The name "Kinnikinnick," roughly means "smoking mixture." It is also made into a tea to treat inflammation of the urinary tract, kidney stones, back sprains and other infections.



Species Uses of Kinnikinnick

Kinnikinnick is a great provider of nectar which attracts many native pollinator species. These species include butterfly caterpillars, butterflies, and hummingbirds. It is further eaten by many mammals including deer and other herbivores. The fruits are consumed by many bird species such as thrushes, wrens, grouse, robins and waxwings. Other animals use the fruits as winter forage including bears, deer, and other small mammals.



Kinnikinnick Neature Question

Question:

What is the nickname for Kinnikinnick?

Answer:

The nickname for Kinnikinnick is "Bearberry" because bears forage heavily upon this species.

For a full list of information & image sources, visit our website at: <http://gorge.ca/ycp-references/>