

***Rubus parviflorus* Nutt.**

Hul'qumi'num name: t̓uqwuḥ

Downriver hə́nq'əmiíə́m name: t'qwumulhp (plant)

Upriver Halkomelem name: t'qwém

English name: Thimbleberry, Western Thimbleberry, Western Thimble Raspberry, or White-flowering Raspberry, Thimble Berry

Family: Rosaceae (Rose)



Image 1

Identifying characteristics: Thimbleberry is a fast-growing deciduous shrub that grows up to 275 cm tall, with large 10-20 cm wide maple-like fuzzy leaves that are fuzzy on either side and alternate on thornless brownish to gray flakey branches. Flowers are white and typical of any flower in the Rosaceae. The fruit (berries) hangs in clusters and turns from pink to red as they ripen and soften. The berries are formed by aggregates of drupelets, each potentially containing a seed.



Image 2

Natural and Cultural History:

Habitat: Thimbleberry grows at lower elevations on the western side of Turtle Island, from Alaska to Mexico. Plants prefers damper sites at the edges of woodland areas but can grow in drier areas as well. Thimbleberry tolerates partial to full shade areas but will thrive more in open areas such as in open fields and along shorelines. In patchy woodland areas, it can form dense thickets.

Reproduction: *R. parviflorus* can spread quickly by vegetative reproduction of underground rhizomes. It can successfully reproduce sexually by seed.



Image 3

Interactions and Human interest: Many birds, insects and mammals enjoy eating t'qwum or Íq^wé̄m (berries) and by planting it could attract wildlife like robins into your backyard. Thimbleberry has many food and medicinal benefits. The berries can be eaten fresh or dry and are easy to pick because they have no thorns like some raspberry and blackberry species. Leaves can be dried and made into a tea which the elders of the indigenous communities use for chest pain. Leaves could be dried and crushed then applied to burns to prevent scarring. The sprouts also got peeled and eaten raw as a vegetable. théth̄q̄í (sprouts) and t'qwum or Íq^wé̄m (berries) are an excellent source of Vitamin C. The bark was boiled down and used as an ingredient in soap. Almost all parts of the plant are consumed by birds, animals, and invertebrates such as slugs

Ethnobotany: t'qwumulhp (plant), t'qwum or Íq^wé̄m (berries), théth̄q̄í (greens- young shoots). Traditionally First Nations used thimbleberry as a food source and for a wide range of medicinal uses such helping with appetite, painkiller, and to help fight other ailments.

Cultivation: Thimbleberry can be easily propagated from cuttings, layering, or root division. To grow from seed, stratify in a warm moist environment for 90 days, then cold moist at 4° C

for 90 days. Scarifying in sulfuric acid or sodium hyperchlorite solutions prior to cold stratification may improve germination.

Harvesting: t'q̄wum or Íq̄w'è̄m can be picked when they are pink and unripe or left to ripen or when they are bright red from July to September. The elders would also pick them when they were pink and still unripe then put them into cedar bags which they then would leave in the sun until they ripened. théth'q̄í is harvested when plant is young in early spring, the leaves and berries can be gathered and dried.

Recipe: Thimbleberry Jam

Ingredients

2 cups of thimbleberries
2 cups of sugar

What you will need:

Saucepan, spoon, measuring cups, 3 - 500 ml jars with lids, sterilized

How to make it

In a heavy saucepan, bring berries and sugar to a boil over medium heat. Cook for 5 minutes or until it gels. Pour into jars, seal and label.

References

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Image 1: http://snowbirdpix.com/images/mt/plants/jorgensen/rubus_parviflorus004.jpg

Image 2: https://c1.staticflickr.com/1/57/202172777_1fc11d09ac_n.jpg

Image 3: https://plants.usda.gov/gallery/pubs/rupa_007_php.jpg