



Medicinal Plant Flashcards

Traditional Sugt'stun Medicinal Plant Flashcards

Developed for the Healing Properties of Alaska's Plants Heritage Kit

Chugachmiut Culture and Language Department

Information from Bennett, F and Brewster, K. 2011. Interview of Kathy Brewster by Frances J. Bennett.

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CAUTION: This plant is deadly, do not eat.

Common Name: Baneberry

Sugt'stun Name:

Latin Name: *Actaea rubra*

Habitat: Woodlands

Blooming Time: Late May to early June

Description: Erect perennial plant, 18 to 30" with fairly large compound, 3 to 5-parted, toothed leaves.

Comments: **CAUTION – HIGHLY POISONOUS.** The ingestion of as few as 6 berries has been known to cause death of a small child.



CAUTION: This plant is deadly, do not eat.

Common Name: False hellebore

Sugt'stun Name:

Latin Name: *Veratrum viride* ssp. *Eschscholtzii*

Description: This is a large plant (up to 5 feet tall) with very large broadly ovate leaves with obvious linear veins that clasp the thick stalk.



CAUTION: This plant is deadly, do not eat.

Common Name: Monkshood

Sugt'stun Name:

Latin Name: *Aconitum delphinifolium*

Habitat: Woodlands, meadows, into mid-alpine areas

Blooming Time: Late June to mid-August

Description: A tall, branched slender plant 2 to 4' (much smaller in alpine areas).

Comments: **A poisonous plant, DO NOT EAT.** Once called wolfbane, as it was used in bait for killing wolves. Can be dried for use in decorative arrangements by hanging upside-down.



CAUTION: This plant is deadly, do not touch.

Common Name: Water Hemlock
Sugt'stun Name:
Latin Name: Cicuta douglasii

Habitat: Marshes and edges of lakes

Blooming Time: July and August

Description: Plant with 2½ to 4' tall hollow stems. Leaves are compound, divided into 3 to 5 broad, pointed toothed leaflets.

Comments: The roots contain Cicutotoxin and are **VERY POISONOUS!** This is the plant that was used to kill Socrates. The roots have hollow transverse chambers unlike other genera in this family. This plant is sometimes confused with Angelica or Wild Celery, which is edible.



CAUTION: This medicinal plant can be dangerous if not used properly

Common Name: Pacific Red Elder, False Elder

Sugt'stun Name: Qaruckaq

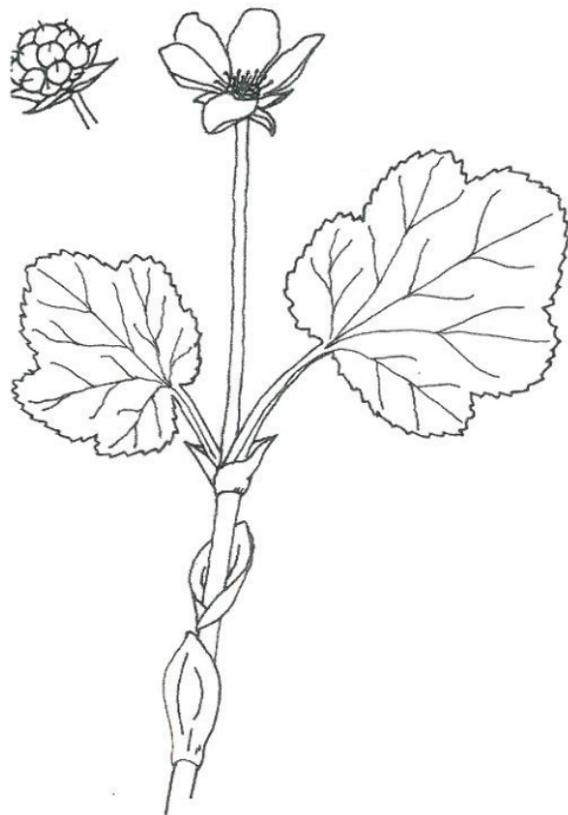
Latin Name: Sambucus racemosa

Habitat: Woods and sub alpine meadows

Description: Flowers are yellow to white and the fruit is bright red. The twigs are pithy and soft (Hulten 1968)

Comments: **Take Care** - Ingesting parts of this plant may result in diarrhea and vomiting due to poisonous cyanogenic glycoside in the roots, stems, bark, and leaves and, to a lesser degree, in flowers and unripe fruit. Tea made from leaves or branches can cause poisoning. Berries should first be cooked and seeded before consuming.

Cures: Red elder switches relieve rheumatism. After soaking the switches in hot water, the patient switched with them and bathed in the water in which they were soaked. A decoction of dried elder flowers was also drunk for the same purpose. Ingesting too much tea may result in cyanide poisoning.



CAUTION: This medicinal plant can be dangerous if not used properly

Common Name: Cloudberry, Low Bush Salmonberry

Sugt'stun Name: Aqagwik

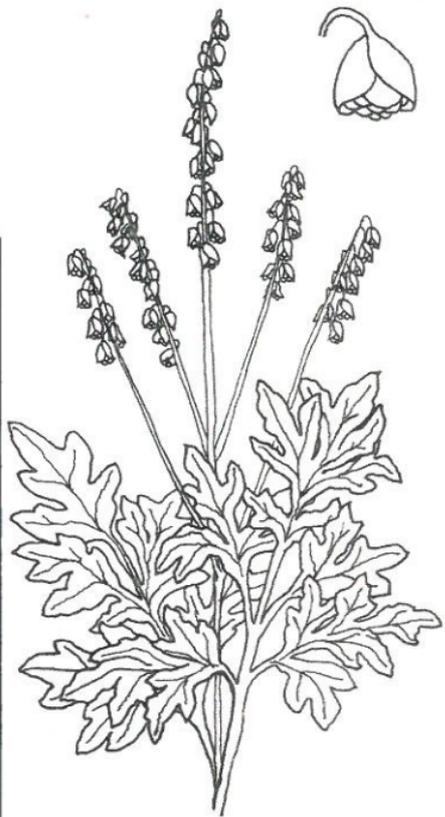
Latin Name: *Rubus chamaemorus*

Habitat: Bogs and tundra

Blooming Time: Late May and June

Description: A low, herbaceous plant having coarse veined, long stemmed leaves with 5 lobes and 1" flowers with 5 (sometimes 4) rounded white petals (like an apple blossom).

Comments: Reportedly one should not eat cloudberry when one has a stomach ache or a large cut because doing so may produce greater pain. Eating cloudberry may cause a cut to become infected.



Common Name: Wormwood
Sugt'stun Name: Caik
Latin Name: Artemisia Tilesii

Habitat: Alpine meadows and slopes

Blooming Time: Late June and July

Description: Sharply dissected, pinnately divided, dark green leaves. The nodding long-stemmed flower heads are yellowish. Stems and flowers are grayish from hairs.

Cures: Wormwood switches in the steambath reportedly opens pores more than switching with most other plants and thus causes the herb to be an effective medicine for respiratory problems like pneumonia and whooping cough, as is wormwood tea made by boiling or steeping the leafy stalks for approximately one half hour to an hour. Drinking strong wormwood tea may produce vomiting is said to rid the stomach of an undesired slimy material from respiratory problems and thus facilitate healing. Another medicinal use for dried or fresh wormwood leaves is as a poultice for infections.

Collection: Leafy wormwood stalks are gathered in June and July, preferably before the flowers and seeds develop, and dry them for future use as steambath switches. An alternative is to remove the flowers and seeds. The flowers and seeds are not used because they detach easily while switching.



Common Name	Watermelon Berries (Twisted Stalk)
Sugt'stun Name	Meruaqutaq or Muuguaq
Latin Name	<i>Streptopus amplexifolius</i>

Habitat: Moist woods and meadows

Blooming Time: Mid-June to late July

Description: A tall, 1½ to 4' branched, perennial plant with many smooth, rather thin, alternate leaves on crooked (somewhat zigzag) stem. Leaves clasp the stems, have parallel veins, are oval to lance-shaped and have an acute tip.

Comments: **TAKE CARE** the spring shoots can be confused with False Solomon's Seal, a toxic plant. The zigzag stem, twisted flower stalk and characteristic hairs on the lower stems help to differentiate it from the toxic False Solomon's Seal. **Caution:** don't eat too much or it may cause diarrhea.



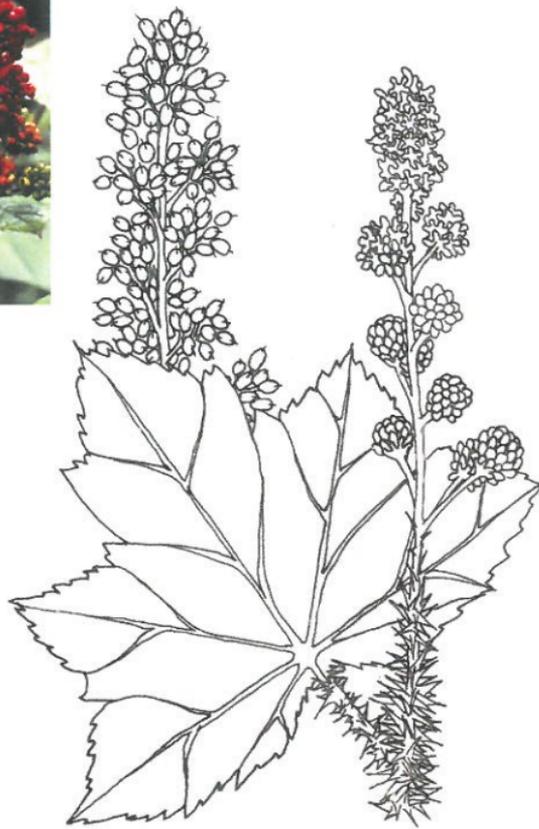
Common Name	Tundra Rose or Shrubby Cinquefoil
Sugt'stun Name	Qutuneskiiq
Latin Name	<i>Potentilla fruticosa</i>

Habitat: Bogs, tundra, and occasionally alpine slopes

Blooming Time: Late June, July and August

Description: A shrub 1 to 3' tall. The stems are dark reddish-brown and have shedding bark. The leaves are thick, bluish-gray green above and 5-parted.

Cures: Teas made by boiling stems, leaves and flowers are said to cure pneumonia, tuberculosis, sore throats, colds, intestinal gas. Teas made from this shrub are said to work as a general physic too.



Common Name	Devil's Club
Sug'stun Name	Cukilanarpak
Latin Name	<i>Oplopanax horridus</i>

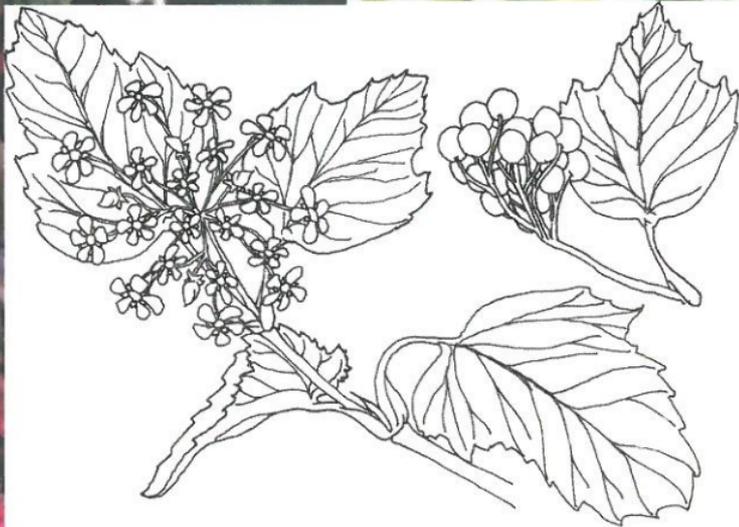
Habitat: Undergrowth on moist, well-drained soil, forming thickets in coastal and flood-plain forests.

Cures: The cambium, with or without the woody inner center, is boiled from one half to two hours and the tea is drunk for a variety of ailments. These include pneumonia, colds, sore throat, arthritis, heart trouble, and cancer. Devil's club has helped reportedly cured cancer. Cambium softened by chewing is placed on a cut or burn. Devil's club root is said to heal arthritis, infected cuts and other external infections and broken bones as well as alleviate aches and pains when used in similar manner to nettle roots. The raw roots are tied together and pounded to soften and flatten them into a pad. The pad is placed on hot rocks, then laid in a damp cloth on the affected area, and left there until the roots cool. This process is repeated.

To remove a rotten tooth, the patient bites down hard on a root that has been softened by pounding and then placed in very hot water. This process is repeated for several hours. One diabetic person reported beneficial results from regularly drinking a decoction of devil's club roots and soaking his feet in it. Drinking very strong devil's club tea can cause vomiting and is used specifically for this purpose.

Collection: Devil's club root can be dried for winter use while the cambium can be obtained anytime.

Other Uses: Washing one's hair with a decoction of the root reportedly helps it grow better.



Common Name	Cranberry (Highbush)
Sugt'stun Name	Qalakuak
Latin Name	Viburnum edule

Habitat: Woods and alpine areas up to at least 2500 feet

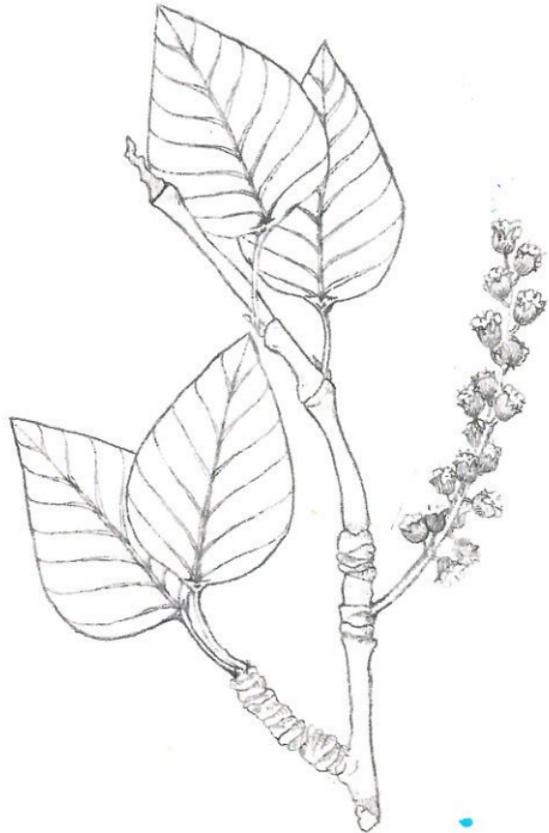
Blooming Time: June to Early July

Description: Usually an upright shrub up to 8' tall with smooth branches. Leaves are opposite on the stems, varied in shape, and have very coarse veins. Berries and flowers in clusters at end of stem.

Comments: Berries are frequently confused with red currants. Berries of the currants hang down in chains, leaves are all maple-leaf shape and are alternate on stems.

Cures: High bush cranberry is used as a cough suppressant and for colds and sore throats. The jelly is commonly stirred into a cup of tea or coffee or swallowed alone as a medicine. The juice and raw berries are used for the same purposes and for curing urinary infections. The cambium of the high bush cranberry is used for external infections such as boils and infected cuts and sores and is said to be especially effective for drawing pus. After removing the outer bark, shavings of the cambium are made, then boiled or steeped in hot water, and placed directly on the ailing area over which a bandage may be laid. Infected cuts are soaked in the water with the cambium. High bush cranberry cambium has also been known to cure a woman's infected breast and a kidney infection was cured by drinking a decoction made from the inner bark.

Collection: The cambium may be dried or frozen for future use and the berries frozen although both can be collected during the winter.



Common Name	Cottonwood
Sugt'stun Name	Ciquq
Latin Name	<i>Populus balsamifera</i>

Habitat: common near rivers and stream beds up into the mountains

Description: Very Large trees, 40 to 90 feet tall with deeply grooved, thick bark; young trees have smooth bark. Leaf shape is very variable.

Cures: Leafy cottonwood branches are used as switches in the steambath and are said to be especially good for arthritic aches and pains. For very bad arthritis, people place cottonwood branches in hot water in the steambath, soak their feet in the water, and then switch themselves well with the branches.



Common Name	Wild Camomile/Pineapple Weed
Sugt'stun Name	Alam'áasjaaq
Latin Name	Matricaria matricarioides

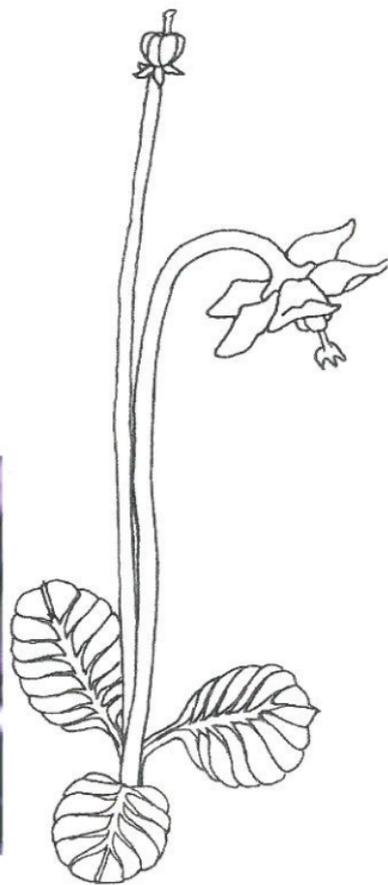
Habitat: Waste places

Blooming Time: July and August

Description: A small plant feathery annual plant, 5 to 8" with small yellowish heads that look and smell somewhat like pineapple.

Comments: This is an introduced plant that is commonly seen. The Russian origin of the Alutiiq name for pineapple weed indicates that Alutiiq use of it may have been learned from the Russians.

Cures: Boiled pineapple weed, except for the roots, and give several teaspoonfuls to a newborn to cure constipation and to pass their first black stool (meconium). Adults may use this medicine to relieve constipation as well.



Common Name	Bethlehem Star or Single Delight
Sugt'stun Name	Ikignganaq
Latin Name	<i>Moneses uniflora</i>

Habitat: Moist woods

Blooming Time: June and July

Description: A small plant with a rosette of small, light green, roundish leaves about ½" with shallow teeth. The flower, on a 2½ to 4" leafless stem, has 5 pointed, waxy petals.

Comments: A distinctive plant frequently found with other pyrolas – very fragrant.

Cures: Bethlehem Star is a strong medicine for upper respiratory ailments including colds, coughs, sore throats, and lung disorders. Some people steep only the leaves, while others say the entire plant including the seed pods can be used and that the plant can be steeped or boiled. The tea may be drunk and use as a gargle.

Bethlehem Star has also been dried and made into tea given for stomach disorders and lung troubles. Placing the flowers on the affected area and tie them in place with a cloth bandage is known to treat tuberculosis good for cuts, rashes, bunions and corns.

Collection: This plant is an evergreen and tends to grow under spruce trees where little snow accumulates and can be gathered fresh throughout the year. It is also dried for future use.



Common Name	Crowberry
Sugt'stun Name	Pakit
Latin Name	<i>Emperium nigrum</i>

Habitat: Woods, heaths, bogs and alpine slopes (especially north-facing)

Blooming Time: May and early June

Description: A low, mat-forming evergreen shrub with small, narrow needle-like leaves. They are followed by firm, round, black, juicy (but seedy), edible berries

Cures: Infusions of crowberry twigs and stems have been administered for colds, kidney troubles, and tuberculosis. Dena'ina Athabascans drink the tea for diarrhea. Kobuk River Eskimos use crowberry juice in sore eyes to relieve snow-blindness. Decoctions of the roots and bark have also been used for sore eyes and cataracts.



Common Name	Purple Daisy or Coastal Fleabane
Sugt'stun Name	Teptukuuyak
Latin Name	<i>Erigeron peregrinus</i>

Habitat: Dry grassy areas and alpine tundra.

Blooming Time: July

Description: Plant 5 to 10". Basal leaves blunt lanceolate with short stems arising from a stout rootstock. Stem leaves gradually become smaller and narrower. Entire plant has coarse hairs. Flowers are usually solitary 1 to 1.5". Ray flowers are quite narrow and can be pink to white.

Cures: The raw roots of these herbs are chewed as medicine for colds, coughs, pneumonia and measles. Tea made by boiling the roots is drunk for the same ailments. The roots can be dried or frozen for winter use.



Common Name	Sweet Coltsfoot
Sugt'stun Name	Nausak
Latin Name	<i>Petasites frigidus</i>

Habitat: Moist woods and meadows

Blooming Time: Late May through mid-June

Description: A distinctive plant with very large, green, glabrous, palmately divided slightly wavy edged leaves. The underside of the leaves are covered with soft white hairs.

Cures: After the long roots are cut into smaller lengths and mashed, they are steeped or boiled and the tea drunk for colds, sore throats, tonsillitis, pneumonia, tuberculosis, and other lung and respiratory problems. One person mentioned using sweet coltsfoot roots for curing measles and stomach problems. The raw root is also chewed and the juice swallowed for all of these ailments.

Collection: People harvest sweet coltsfoot roots during the growing season and freeze or dry them for future use. The roots may also be chopped out of the ground with an axe in the winter. Sweet coltsfoot is not common in the English Bay and Port Graham area and people travel distances to obtain it. They normally leave a small gift where they harvest the plant to thank the plant and to show their respect for it.



Common Name	Salmonberry
Sugt'stun Name	Alagnaq
Latin Name	<i>Rubus spectabilis</i>

Habitat: Moist woods

Description: This shrub forms dense thickets in moist woods. Stems are heavily bristled. Leaves are 3-foliolate and toothed.

Cures: People peel the young stems of this shrub in May and June and eat the stems raw to cure breathing problems. An infusion of salmonberry leaves is a wash for skin problems. The undersides of green or dried salmonberry leaves can be placed on an infection to draw it out or use on a wound that won't heal. Some people dig out the old, mildewy leaves from under the bushes and place these over the sore or wound. This technique is used only with wounds that won't heal. Another method is to bathe the wound first in a tea made of Bethlehem Star...and then apply the poultice of salmonberry leaves.



Common Name	Red Currants
Sug'tstun Name	Kawirqaq Qunisiq
Latin Name	Ribes triste

Habitat: Moist woods, stream edges, low mountain regions

Comments: Very common along highways.

Description: This shrub forms dense thickets in moist woods. Stems are heavily bristled. Leaves are 3-foliolate and toothed.

Cures: People boil the cambium, cool the decoction, and use it as a wash for sore eyes. If sufficient cambium is lacking, the outer bark and leaves may be added. The juice of the northern red currant can also be squeezed into the affected eyes. The Dena'ina also use red currant fruit and stems as medicine for sore eyes.



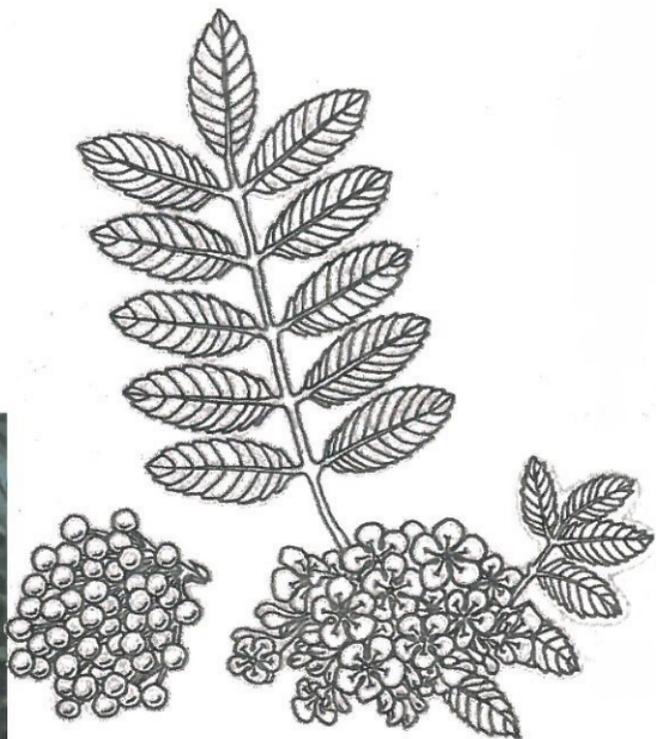
Common Name	Northern Yarrow
Sugt'stun Name	Qanganaruaq
Latin Name	<i>Achillea borealis</i>

Habitat: Roadsides, fields, dry open woods and alpine meadows and low alpine slopes (*note: Kathy Brewster, Nanwalek elder reminds us that pesticides may be sprayed on roadsides, so caution should be taken when gathering*)

Blooming Time: July through August

Description: A very common weedy sturdy perennial plant up to 24" tall with fine, ferny 2 to 3 times pinnately dissected leaves which are variable in length and width.

Cures: People boil or steep the entire Yarrow plant except the roots. Some people also avoid the flowers because they believe them to be poisonous while others say that they are the strongest medicinal part of the plant. Yarrow tea is drunk for asthma, colds, sore throats, flu, stomach cramps, mouth sores, kidney and bladder infections, and internal bleeding (especially in the lungs). People have drunk the tea to cure more serious ailments such as measles and cancer. Both before and after a woman delivers a baby, yarrow tea drunk steadily to cleanse her system and prevent infection. Menstruating women drink yarrow tea to reduce the flow of blood. Yarrow washes or poultices are used for a variety of external ailments including rashes, cuts, itchy areas, boils, and blisters. A newborn child's umbilical cord is washed with yarrow to prevent infection. **Collection:** Yarrow can be gathered during the entire growing season which may last into October. It is dried for winter use by hanging it in bunches by the stem either outdoors on a sunny day or in one's house or other warm building.



Common Name	Mountain Ash (Green or Sitka)
Sugt'stun Name	Esqunaq
Latin Name	<i>Sorbus scopulina</i> or <i>S. sitchensis</i>

Habitat: Woods and sub-alpine areas

Blooming Time: June

Comments: Berries may be used as food, but are bitter until frozen and thawed a few times. This happens naturally on the tree.

Description: Flowers are yellow to white and the fruit is bright red. The twigs are pithy and soft (Hulten 1968)

Cure: Tea is steeped or simmered using mountain ash leaves and cambium for approximately an hour and used to cure tuberculosis, pneumonia, colds, sore throats, fever, flu, and even ulcers. They tend to use the leaves in the summer and the cambium in the winter when the leaves are not available.



CAUTION: This medicinal plant can be dangerous if not used properly

Common Name	Nettle
Sugt'stun Name	Uuqaayanaq
Latin Name	<i>Urtica gracilis</i> or <i>U. lyallii</i>

Habitat: Moist fields, stream banks and edges of wooded areas

Blooming Time: Late June through July

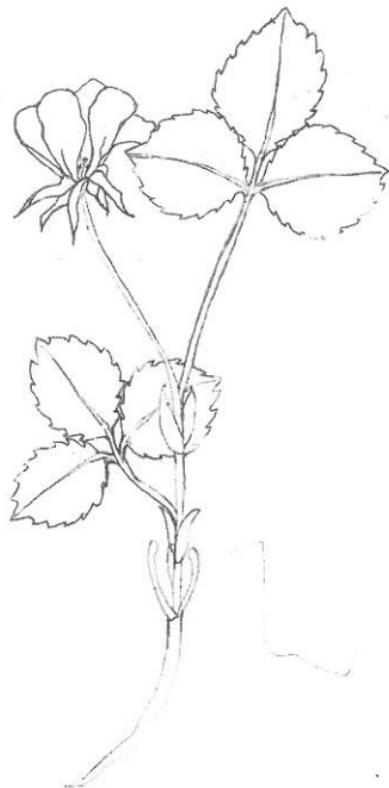
Description: A tall rigid plant up to 40" with slender square stems. The toothed, strongly veined, coarse-looking leaves have short stems and are placed opposite on the stems with stinging hairs.

Cures: Nettle roots have been used to remove rotten teeth. The fine roots are cleaned well, pounded flat, woven together into a small pad heated and then placed on the face over the place where the rotten tooth is located. The patient also bites down with the rotten tooth on a heated nettle root while the pad, which is changed several times, is being applied. A variation of this technique is to tie the nettle roots together with a string, crush them, wrap them in a cloth, and then put them in a basin on top of a hot rock. Then the patient puts a blanket over their head and the basin while hot water is poured over the rock and roots. The nettle roots are then applied as described above. A simpler method is to merely crush the root which the patient bites with the decayed root. The tooth eventually crumbles and falls out.

Large pieces of nettle root are crushed, heated on a rock and placed on a sprain, on an old injury, or on an area that has previously been infected in order to promote healing.

A decoction of nettle roots has also been used for constipation.

Other uses: Burning nettle leaves to drive away mosquitoes. Seal hunters once rubbed themselves with nettles before going out to sea. The practice kept them awake during the long night.



CAUTION: This medicinal plant can be dangerous if not used properly

Common Name	Nagoonberry
Sugt'stun Name	Puyurnaq
Latin Name	Rubus arcticus

Family: Rose/Rosaceae

Habitat: Stream banks, moist fields, lake margins, tundra and alpine slopes throughout most of Alaska except the extreme North Slope.

Blooming Time: June and July

Description: There are 3 varieties in Alaska. These are low plants with long-stemmed, 3-parted, coarsely veined leaves (much like strawberries) that spread rapidly by underground runners.