

University of Montana

ScholarWorks at University of Montana

University of Montana Conference on Undergraduate Research (UMCUR)

An Exploration of Ethnobotanically Significant Plants to the Native American Tribes of Montana

Margaret I. Magee

mm122305@umconnect.umt.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/umcur>

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Magee, Margaret I., "An Exploration of Ethnobotanically Significant Plants to the Native American Tribes of Montana" (2021). *University of Montana Conference on Undergraduate Research (UMCUR)*. 10.

https://scholarworks.umt.edu/umcur/2021/socialsciences_oral/10

This Presentation is brought to you for free and open access by ScholarWorks at University of Montana. It has been accepted for inclusion in University of Montana Conference on Undergraduate Research (UMCUR) by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at University of Montana. For more information, please contact scholarworks@mso.umt.edu.



An Exploration of Ethnobotanically
Significant Plants to the Native
American Tribes of Montana



By: Margaret Magee

Welcome to the University of Montana Ethnobotany Garden

Explore Montana's native plants &
their traditional cultural uses by
Native people.

Visit the Garden's eight Tribal Circles,
each representing one of the eight
Tribal Nations in Montana.



Arrowleaf balsamroot by
Nancy Seiler ©



What is Ethnobotany?

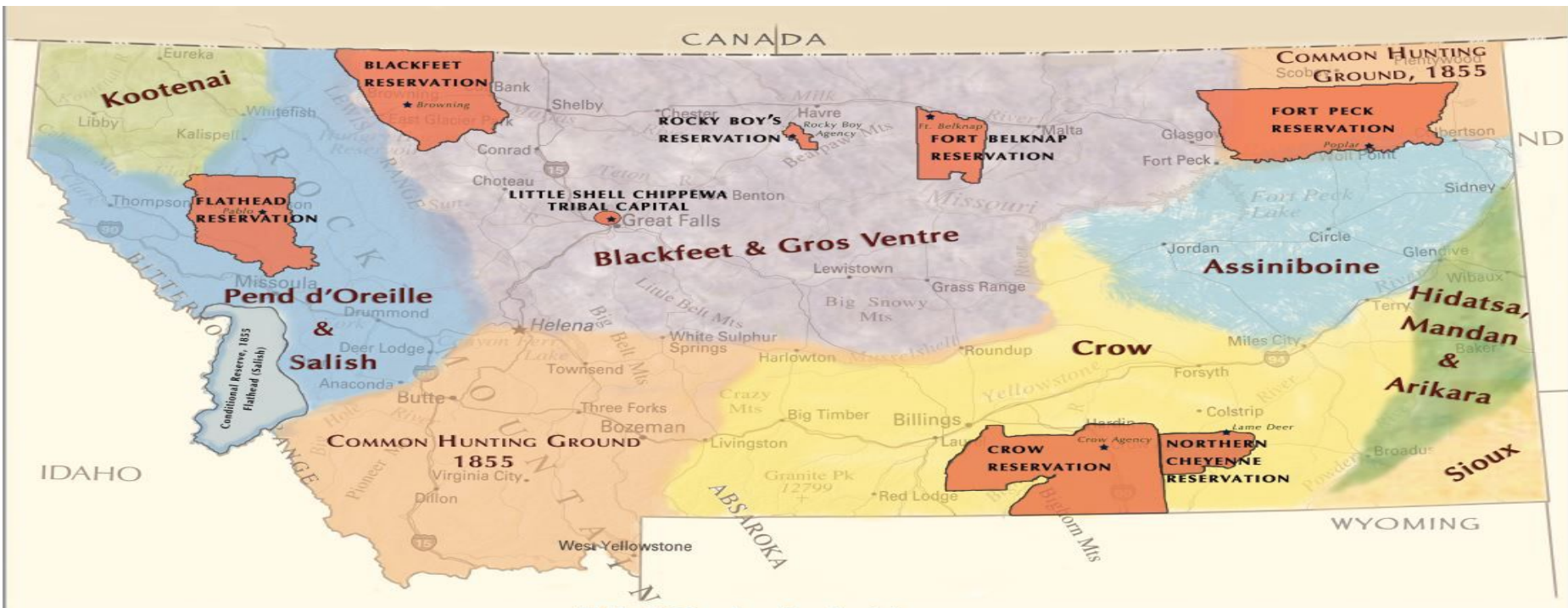
Put simply, Ethnobotany is... the study of human uses of plants.

Uses: Food, Medicine, Ceremony, Tools, Trade, Cosmetics,
Conservation, and Phenology



"Ethnobotany as a subject is a highly interdisciplinary field weaving ecology, anthropology, history, chemistry, linguistics and botany together to understand how people interact with their respective landscapes."

- Rose Bear Don't Walk



Tribal Territories in Montana

Boundaries as defined by the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1851, and the Flathead and Blackfoot Treaties of 1855.*



Reservations today shown in red.

★ Star indicates location of tribal capital.

Names Tribes Call Themselves: A Key

Salish / Sélìsh

Pend d'Oreille / Qlispé

Kootenai / Ksanka

Blackfoot / Niitsitapi (Pikuni)

Chippewa (Ojibwe) / Annishinabe

Plains Cree / Ne-i-yah-wahk

Gros Ventre / A'aninin

Assiniboine / Nakoda, Nakona

Sioux / Lakota, Dakota

Northern Cheyenne / Tsetsêhesêstâhase and So'taa'eo'o

Crow / Apsáalooke

Little Shell Chippewa / Annishinabe and Métis

Reservation Lands in Montana, and American Indian Tribes based on those lands

Blackfoot Reservation: Blackfoot

Fort Belknap Reservation: Gros Ventre and Assiniboine

Rocky Boy's Reservation: Chippewa Cree

Crow Reservation: Crow

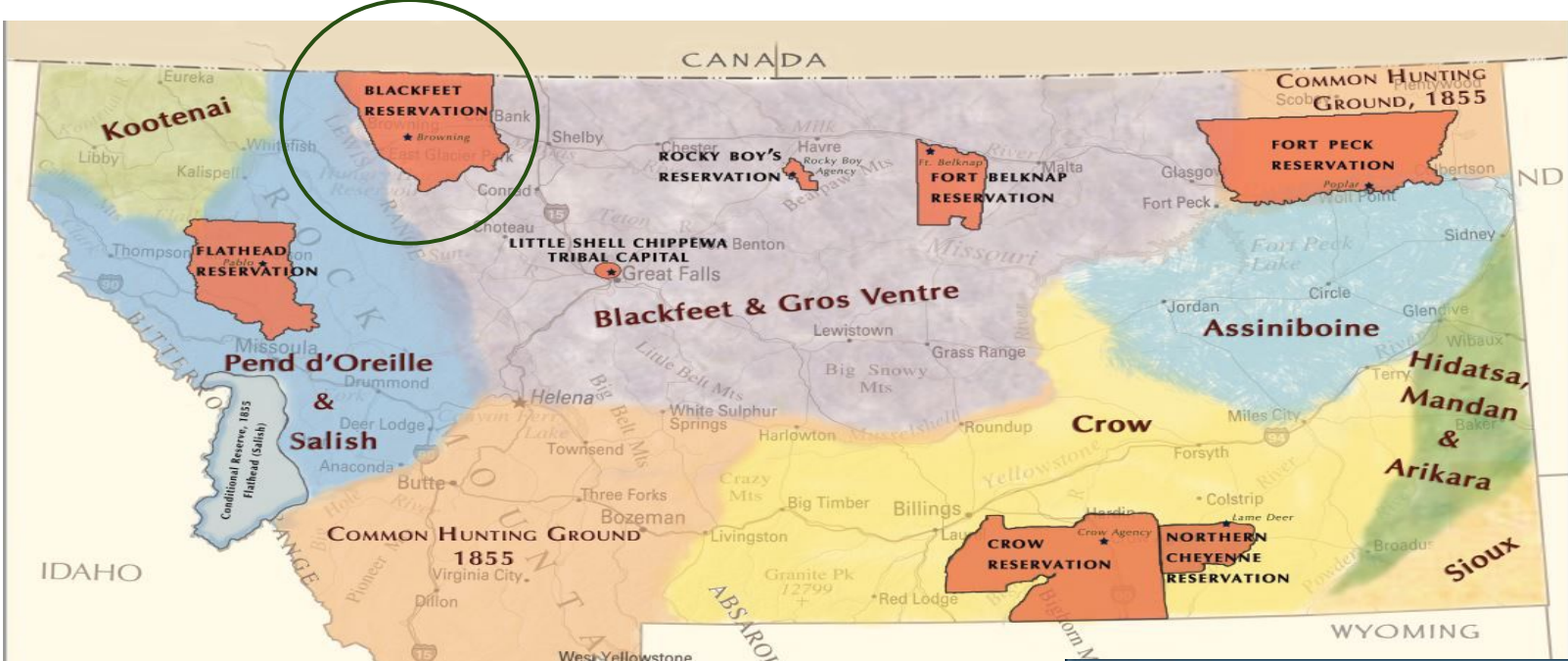
Fort Peck Reservation: Assiniboine and Sioux

Landless, but headquartered in Cascade County: Little Shell Band of Chippewa

Flathead Reservation: Salish, Pend d'Oreille, Kootenai

Northern Cheyenne Reservation: Northern Cheyenne

* Boundaries shown on this map reflect the demarcation of territories by non-Indian officials at treaty time, and do not necessarily accurately represent tribal territories occupied in the 1850s.



Tribal Territories in Montana

Boundaries as defined by the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1851, and the Flathead and B

Reservations today shown in red. ★ Star indicates locati

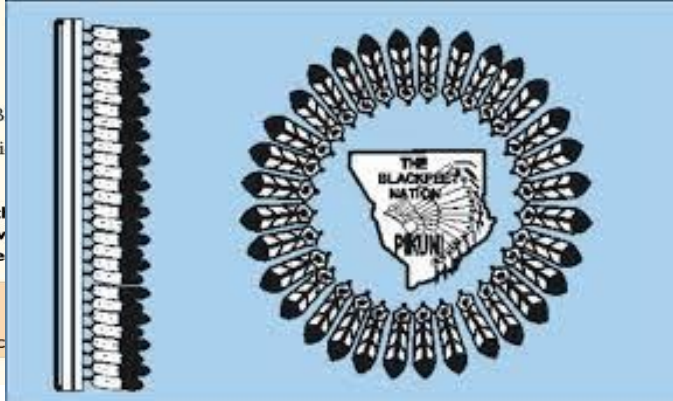
Names Tribes Call Themselves: A Key

Salish / Sélis	Blackfoot / Niitsitapi (Pikuni)	Gros Ventre / A'aninin	Northern Cheyenne
Pend d'Oreille / Qlispé	Chippewa (Ojibwe) / Anishinabe	Assiniboine / Nakoda, Nakona	Crow
Kootenai / Ksanka	Plains Cree / Ne-i-yah-wahk	Sioux / Lakota, Dakota	Little

Reservation Lands in Montana, and American Indian Tribes based on those lands

Blackfoot Reservation: Blackfoot	Crow Reservation: Crow
Fort Belknap Reservation: Gros Ventre and Assiniboine	Fort Peck Reservation: Assiniboine and Sioux
Rocky Boy's Reservation: Chippewa Cree	Landless, but headquartered in Cascade County: Little Shell Band of C

* Boundaries shown on this map reflect the demarcation of territories by non-Indian officials at treaty time, and do not necessarily accurately represent tribal territories occupied in the 1850s.



Plants of the Blackfeet Nation

Erythronium grandiflorum
Glacier Lily

Uses:

- Edible food plant
- Poultice for boils



Berberis repens
Oregon Grape

Uses:

- Berries eaten
- Roots used as a yellow dye
- Treatment of kidney and stomach issues and mountain fever



Cornus stolonifera
Red-osier Dogwood

Uses:

- Tea to cure various ailments
- Bark used in tobacco mixture
- Produce gambling wheel



Stipa spartea
Porcupine Grass

Uses:

- Used in the production of hairbrushes



Other Notable Plants:

Thin-leaved Alder (*Alnus incana*) - Medicine

Golden Pea (*Thermopsis montana*) - Phenology

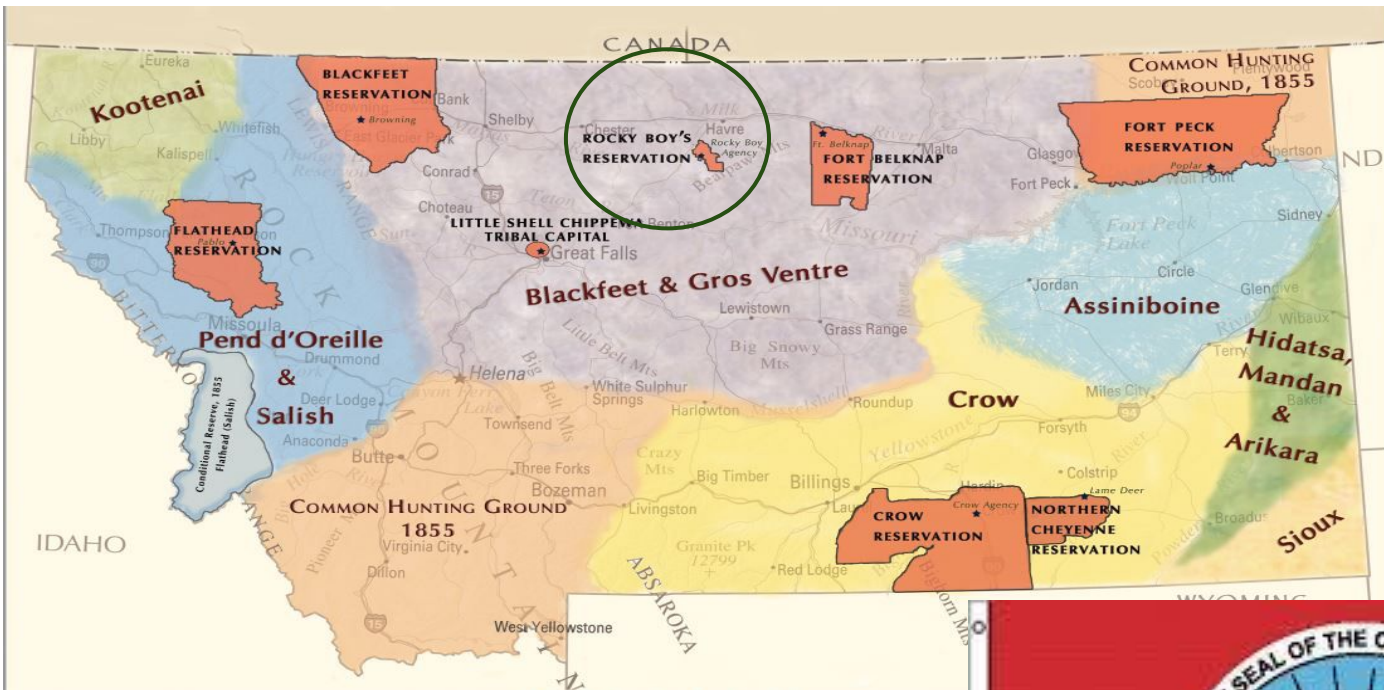
Sweet Grass (*Hierochloa odorata*) - Sundance Ceremony

Willow (*Salix sp.*) - Construction

Common Juniper (*Juniperus communis*) - Medicine

Blue Grama Grass (*Bouteloua gracilis*) - Tools, Phenology





Tribal Territories in Montana

Boundaries as defined by the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1851, and the Flathead and Blackfoot Reservations.

Reservations today shown in red. ★ Star indicates location

Names Tribes Call Themselves: A Key

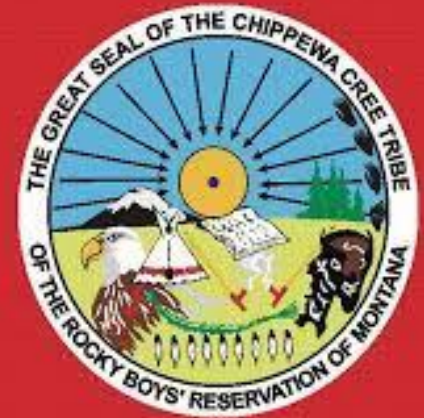
Salish / Sélísh	Blackfeet / Niitsitapi (Pikuni)	Gros Ventre / A'aninin	Northern Cheyenne / Nóté
Pend d'Oreille / Qlispé	Chippewa (Ojibwe) / Anishinabe	Assiniboine / Nakoda, Nakona	Crow / Apsáloka
Kootenai / Ksanka	Plains Cree / Ne-i-yah-wahk	Sioux / Lakota, Dakota	Little Shell / Chippewa

Reservation Lands in Montana, and American Indian Tribes based on those lands

Blackfeet Reservation: Blackfeet
 Fort Belknap Reservation: Gros Ventre and Assiniboine
 Rocky Boy's Reservation: Chippewa Cree

Crow Reservation: Crow
 Fort Peck Reservation: Assiniboine and Sioux
 Landless, but headquartered in Cascade County: Little Shell Band of Chippewa

* Boundaries shown on this map reflect the demarcation of territories by non-Indian officials at treaty time, and do not necessarily accurately represent tribal territories occupied in the 1850s.



Plants of the Tribes of the Rocky Boy's Reservation

Cicuta maculata

Spotted Water Hemlock

- Root used to treat inflammation and arthritis
- Poisonous if used incorrectly
- Seed smoked with tobacco



Mentha arvensis

Wild Mint (below)

Uses:

- Tea
- infusion to treat fever and cold symptoms
- Treatment for oral pain
- Hemostat



Anemone canadensis

Meadow Anemone (above)

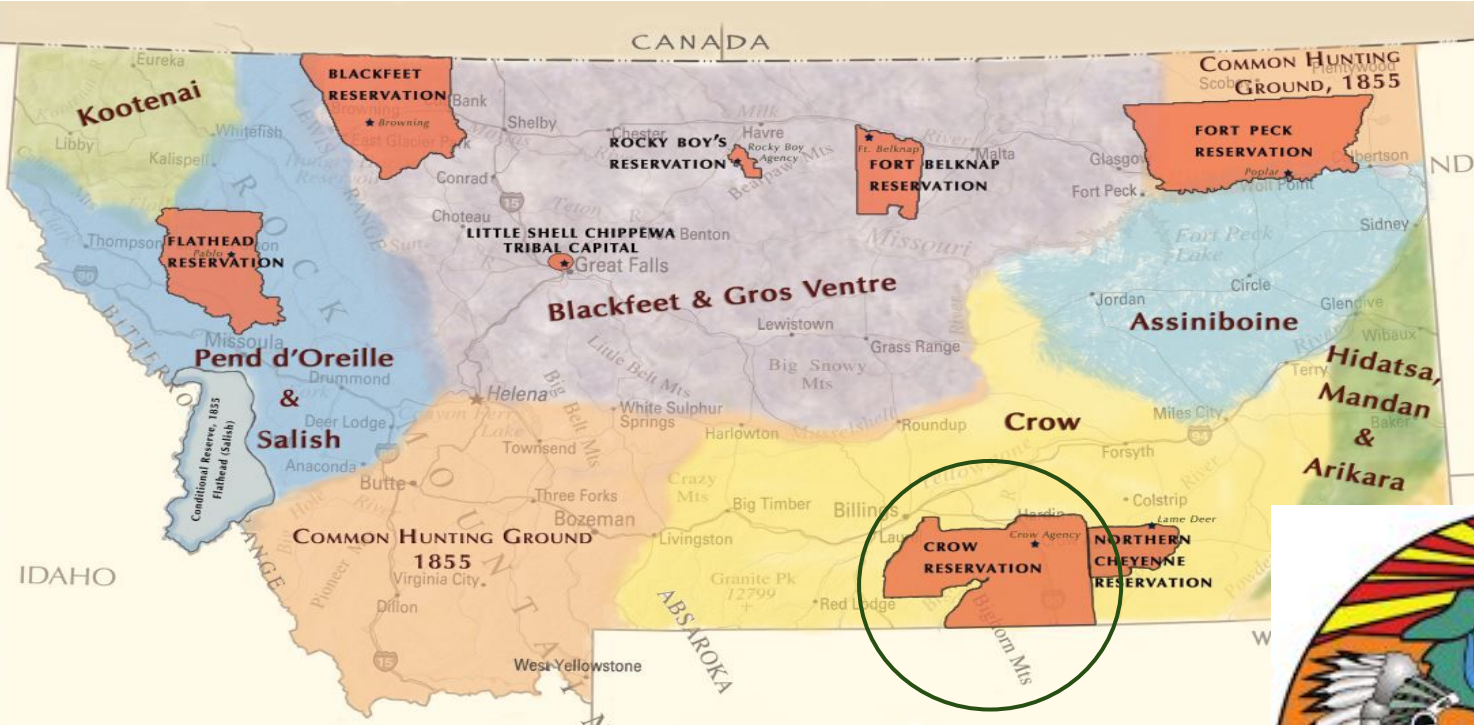
Uses:

- Root forms a skin aid
- Leaves function as a hemostat to treat sores, nose bleeds, and bleeding wounds

Other Notable Plants of the Rocky Boy's Tribes

- Red Baneberry (*Actaea rubra*)-Medicine
- Hardstem Bulrush (*Schoenoplectus acutus*)- Food, Medicine
- Beebalm (*Monarda fistulosa*)- Medicine
- Heal All (*Prunella vulgaris*)- Medicine
- Pussytoes (*Antennaria microphylla*)- Food, Medicine
- Canby's Wild Lovage (*Ligusticum canbyi*)- Medicine
- Black Hawthorn (*Crataegus douglasii*)- Medicine, Tools, Ceremony





Tribal Territories in Montana

Boundaries as defined by the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1851, and the Flathead and Blackfeet Treaties of 1855.*

Reservations today shown in red. ★ Star indicates location of tribal capital.

Names Tribes Call Themselves: A Key

- | | | | |
|--------------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|--|
| Salish / Sélish | Blackfeet / Niitsitapi (Pikuni) | Gros Ventre / A'aninin | Northern Cheyenne / Tsetsêhesêstâ |
| Pend d'Oreille / Qlispé | Chippewa (Ojibwe) / Annishinabe | Assiniboine / Nakoda, Nakona | Crow / Apsáalooke |
| Kootenai / Ksanka | Plains Cree / Ne-i-yah-wahk | Sioux / Lakota, Dakota | Little Shell Chippewa / Annishinabe |

Reservation Lands in Montana, and American Indian Tribes based on those lands

Blackfeet Reservation: Blackfeet	Crow Reservation: Crow	Flathead Reservation: Salish,
Fort Belknap Reservation: Gros Ventre and Assiniboine	Fort Peck Reservation: Assiniboine and Sioux	Northern Cheyenne Reser
Rocky Boy's Reservation: Chippewa Cree	Landless, but headquartered in Cascade County: Little Shell Band of Chippewa	



* Boundaries shown on this map reflect the demarcation of territories by non-Indian officials at treaty time, and do not necessarily accurately represent tribal territories occupied in the 1850s.

Plants of the Crow Nation

Asclepias speciosa
Showy Milkweed

Uses:

- Flowers and seeds eaten
- Livestock branding
- Sap applied to achy joints



Yucca glauca
Great Plains Yucca

Uses:

- Root used in shampoo
- Flowers eaten
- Prepared hides for tanning



Shepherdia canadensis
Soapberry

Uses:

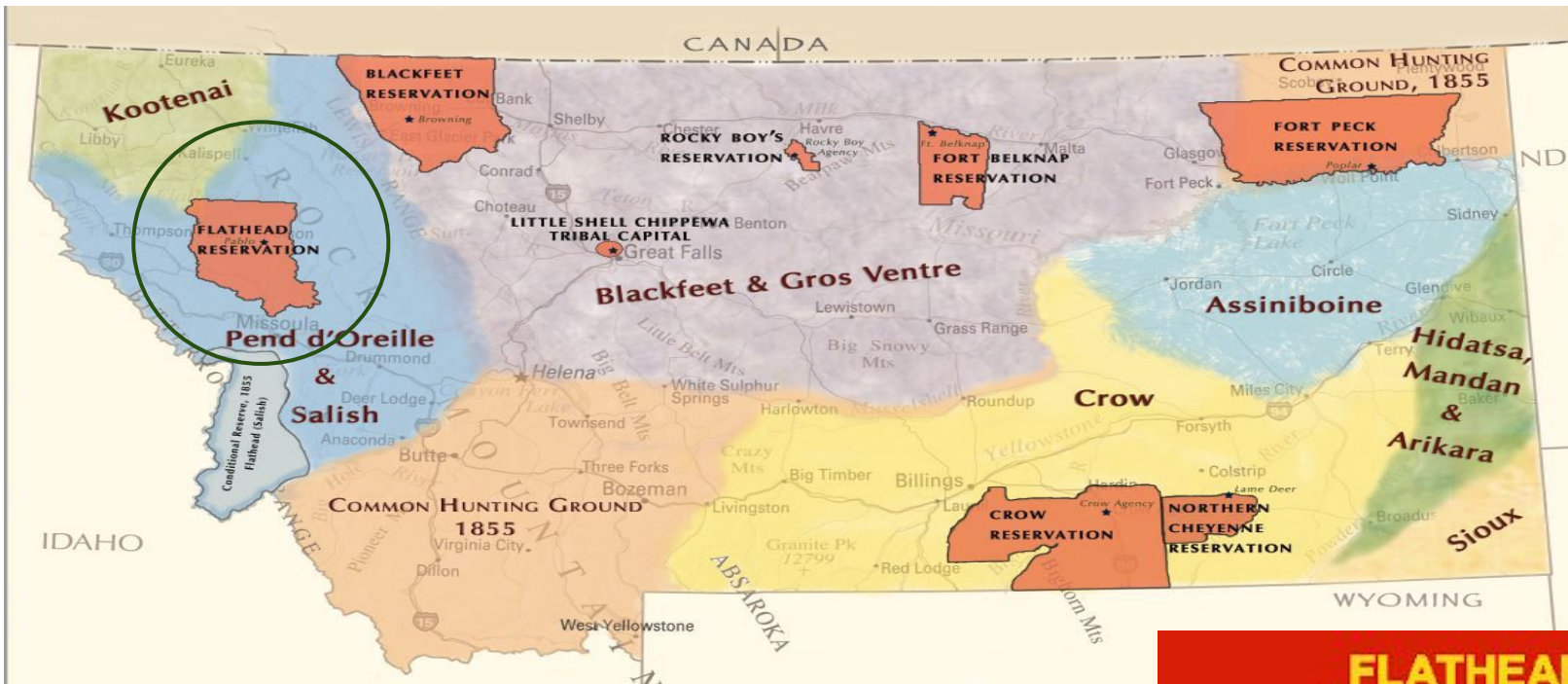
- Berries prepared into jellies, jams and patties
- Source of Vitamin C



Other Notable Crow Plants



- Subalpine Fir (*Abies lasiocarpa*)- Medicine
- Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*)-Medicine
- Serviceberry (*Amelanchier alnifolia*)- Construction
- Bigseed Biscuitroot (*Lomatium macrocarpum*)-
Medicine
- Elderberry (*Sambucus nigra*)- Food, Construction
- Paper Birch (*Betula papyrifera*)- Tools
- Narrow-leaved purple coneflower (*Echinacea angustifolia*)- Medicine



Tribal Territories in Montana

Boundaries as defined by the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1851, and the Flathead and Blackfeet Treaties of 1855.

Reservations today shown in red. ★ Star indicates location of tribal headquarters.

Names Tribes Call Themselves: A Key

Salish / Sélísh	Blackfeet / Niitsitapi (Pikuni)	Gros Ventre / A'aninin	Northern Cheyenne / Nóté / Nóté
Pend d'Oreille / Qlispé	Chippewa (Ojibwe) / Annishinabe	Assiniboine / Nakoda, Nakona	Crow / Apsáalokan
Kootenai / Ksanka	Plains Cree / Ne-i-yah-wahk	Sioux / Lakota, Dakota	Little Shell Chippewa / Chippewa Cree

Reservation Lands in Montana, and American Indian Tribes based on those lands

Blackfeet Reservation: Blackfeet	Crow Reservation: Crow
Fort Belknap Reservation: Gros Ventre and Assiniboine	Fort Peck Reservation: Assiniboine and Sioux
Rocky Boy's Reservation: Chippewa Cree	Landless, but headquartered in Cascade County: Little Shell Band of Chippewa

* Boundaries shown on this map reflect the demarcation of territories by non-Indian officials at treaty time, and do not necessarily accurately represent tribal territories occupied in the 1850s.



Lewisia rediviva
Bitterroot

Plants of the Flathead Reservation Tribes

Highly honored and cherished plant by the Salish

Uses:

- Good source of protein and vitamins C and A
- Saved for winter to provide needed carbohydrates
- Praised and prayed to for a good harvest.



Monarda fistulosa
Beebalm

Kootenai

Uses:

- Tea to alleviate kidney problems
- Perfume in the sweathouse



Camassia quamash
Camas

Upper Pend d'Oreille

Uses:

- Important food source
- Cash crop to trade to the Kootenai

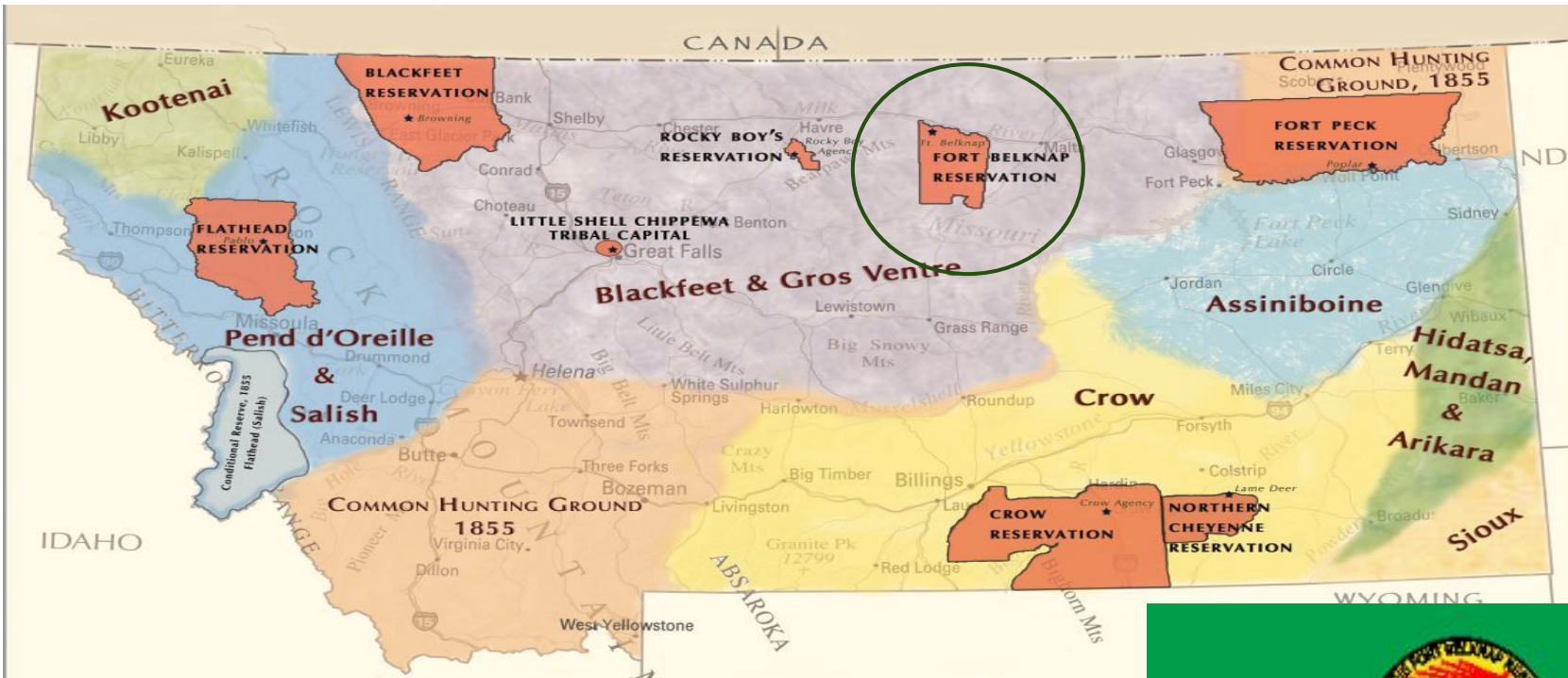


Other Notable Plants of the Flathead Reservation Tribes



- Kinickinnick (*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*)- Food, Ceremony, Medicine
- Arrowleaf Balsamroot (*Balsamorhiza sagittata*)- Food, Medicine
- Spring Beauty (*Claytonia lanceolata*)- Food, Phenology
- Wild Rose (*Rosa woodsii*)- Food, Ceremony, Medicine, Phenology
- Silverberry (*Elaeagnus commutata*)- Tools
- Chokecherry (*Prunus virginiana*)- Food
- Wild strawberry (*Fragaria virginiana*) - Food





Tribal Territories in Montana

Boundaries as defined by the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1851, and the Flathead and Blackfeet

Reservations today shown in red. ★ Star indicates location of tribal headquarters

Names Tribes Call Themselves: A Key

Salish / Sélísh	Blackfeet / Niitsitapi (Pikuni)	Gros Ventre / A'aninin	Northern Cheyenne
Pend d'Oreille / Qlispé	Chippewa (Ojibwe) / Annishinabe	Assiniboine / Nakoda, Nakona	Crow / Apsáalokan
Kootenai / Ksanka	Plains Cree / Ne-i-yah-wahk	Sioux / Lakota, Dakota	Little Shell Chippewa

Reservation Lands in Montana, and American Indian Tribes based on those lands

Blackfeet Reservation: Blackfeet	Crow Reservation: Crow
Fort Belknap Reservation: Gros Ventre and Assiniboine	Fort Peck Reservation: Assiniboine and Sioux
Rocky Boy's Reservation: Chippewa Cree	Landless, but headquartered in Cascade County: Little Shell Band of Chippewa

★ Boundaries shown on this map reflect the demarcation of territories by non-Indian officials at treaty time, and do not necessarily accurately represent tribal territories occupied in the 1850s.



Plants of the Fort Belknap Reservation

Artemisia ludoviciana
White sagebrush

Uses:

- Used as a febrifuge to reduce high fevers



Helianthus annuus
Common Sunflower

Uses:

- Seed oil used as face and body paint
- Seeds eaten and used in cooking
- High energy source



Prunus virginiana
Chokecherry

Uses:

- Infusion for ease stomach afflictions



Other Notable Plants of the Fort Belknap Tribes

- Sweetgrass (*Hierochloa odorata*)-
Cosmetics
- Wild Mint (*Mentha arvensis*)-
Medicine
- Rose (*Rosa sp.*)- Medicine
- Meadow Rue (*Thalictrum sp.*)-
Cosmetics





Tribal Territories in Montana

Boundaries as defined by the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1851, and the Flathead and Blackfeet Treaties of 1855.

Reservations today shown in red. ★ Star indicates location of tribal agency.

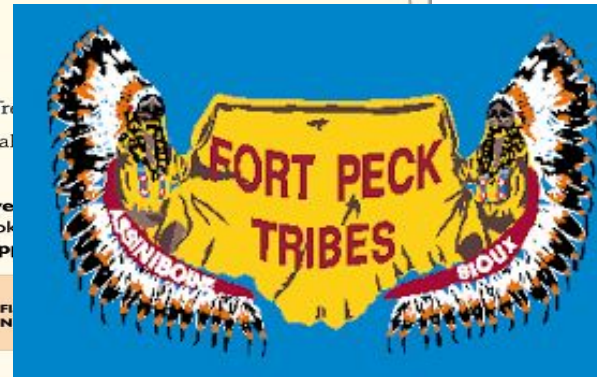
Names Tribes Call Themselves: A Key

Salish / Sélish	Blackfeet / Niitsitapi (Pikuni)	Gros Ventre / A'aninin	Northern Cheyenne / Nóté
Pend d'Oreille / Qlispé	Chippewa (Ojibwe) / Annishinabe	Assiniboine / Nakoda, Nakona	Crow / Apsáalookpa
Kootenai / Ksanka	Plains Cree / Ne-i-yah-wahk	Sioux / Lakota, Dakota	Little Shell Chippewa

Reservation Lands in Montana, and American Indian Tribes based on those lands

Blackfeet Reservation: Blackfeet
Fort Belknap Reservation: Gros Ventre and Assiniboine
Rocky Boy's Reservation: Chippewa Cree
Crow Reservation: Crow
Fort Peck Reservation: Assiniboine and Sioux
Landless, but headquartered in Cascade County: Little Shell Band of Chippewa

* Boundaries shown on this map reflect the demarcation of territories by non-Indian officials at treaty time, and do not necessarily accurately represent tribal territories occupied in the 1850s.



Plants of the Fort Peck Reservation

Dalea purpurea
Purple Prairie Clover

Uses:

- Treatment of stomach maladies, disease prevention, measles, and heart afflictions

Echinacea angustifolia
Moench Purple Coneflower

Uses:

- Root as treatment for rabies and snake bites and gunshot wounds
- Reduce inflammation and lessen pain

Acer negundo
Boxelder

Uses:

- Used to create charcoal that is utilized for ceremonial painting and tattooing



Other Notable Species of the Tribes of the Fort Peck Reservation

- Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*)- Medicine
- White sagebrush (*Artemisia ludoviciana*)- Medicine, Ceremony
- Chokecherry (*Prunus virginiana*)-Food, Ceremony
- Creeping Juniper (*Juniperus horizontalis*)- Medicine
- Shrubby Cinquefoil (*Dasiphora fruticosa*)- Food





Tribal Territories in Montana

Boundaries as defined by the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1851, and the Flathead and Blackfoot Reservations of 1855.

Reservations today shown in red. ★ Star indicates location of tribal capital.

Names Tribes Call Themselves: A Key

Salish / Sélisht	Blackfeet / Niitsitapi (Pikuni)	Gros Ventre / A'aninin	Northern Cheyenne / Siksika
Pend d'Oreille / Qlispé	Chippewa (Ojibwe) / Anishinabe	Assiniboine / Nakoda, Nakona	Crow / Apsálooke
Kootenai / Ksanka	Plains Cree / Ne-i-yah-wahk	Sioux / Lakota, Dakota	Little Shell Chippewa

Reservation Lands in Montana, and American Indian Tribes based on those lands

Blackfeet Reservation: Blackfeet
Fort Belknap Reservation: Gros Ventre and Assiniboine
Rocky Boy's Reservation: Chippewa Cree
Crow Reservation: Crow
Fort Peck Reservation: Assiniboine and Sioux
Landless, but headquartered in Cascade County: Little Shell Band of Chippewa

* Boundaries shown on this map reflect the demarcation of territories by non-Indian officials at treaty time, and do not necessarily accurately represent tribal territories occupied in the 1850s.



Allium cernuum
Nodding Onion

Plants of the Little Shell Chippewa

Uses:

- All of plant eaten
- Tea to aid in upset stomachs
- External remedy for skin ailments



Heuchera cylindrica
Alumroot

Uses:

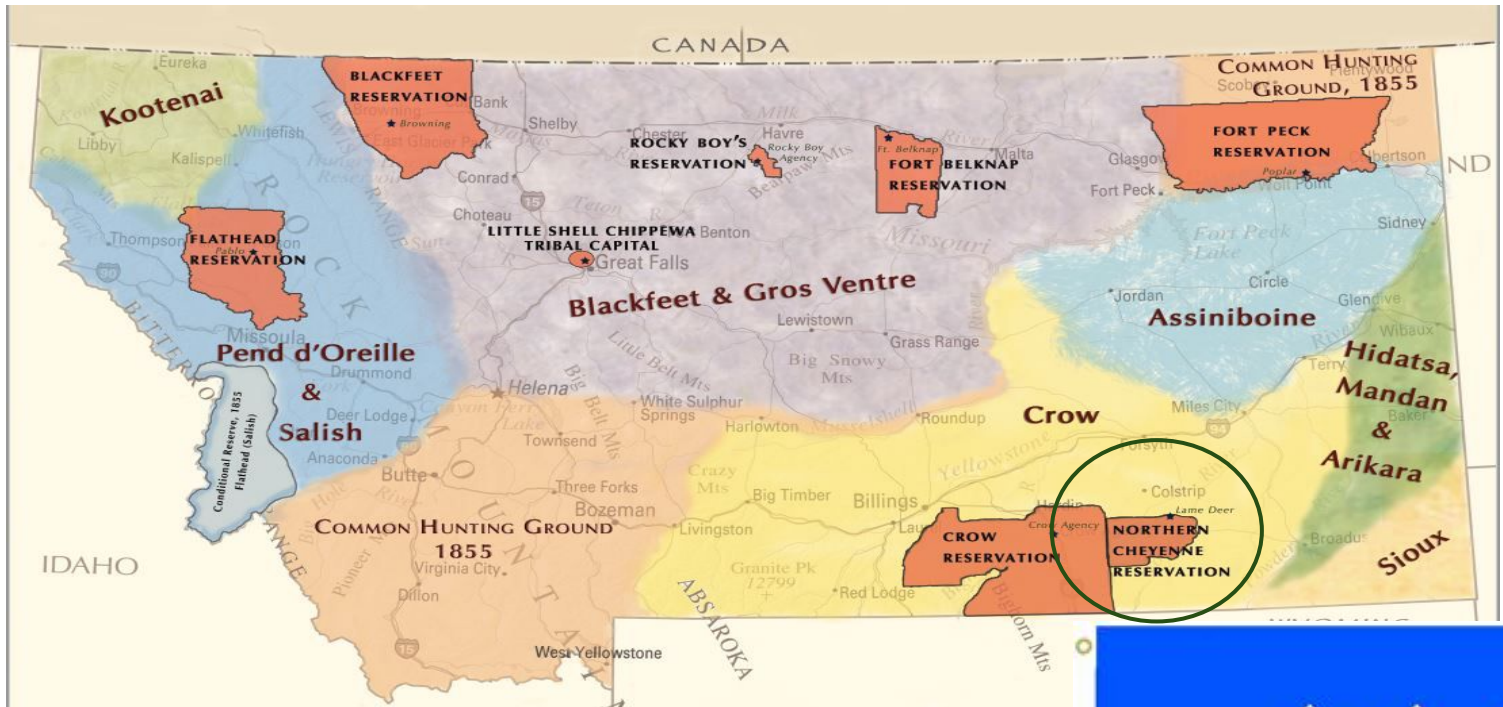
- Put to use as an astringent and antiseptic
- Internal remedy for inflammation and stomach maladies
- Coagulant



Other Notable Plants of the Little Shell Chippewa

- Maximilian sunflower (*Helianthus maximiliani*)- Food, Medicine, Cosmetics, Tools
- Golden Currant (*Ribes aureum*)- Food, Conservation
- Blue Gramma (*Bouteloua gracilis*)- Medicine, Phenology, Tools





Tribal Territories in Montana

Boundaries as defined by the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1851, and the Flathead and Blackfeet Reservations of 1855.

Reservations today shown in red. ★ Star indicates location of tribal capital.

Names Tribes Call Themselves: A Key

Salish / Sélish	Blackfeet / Niitsitapi (Pikuni)	Gros Ventre / A'aninin	Northern Cheyenne / Apsáokwiche
Pend d'Oreille / Qlispé	Chippewa (Ojibwe) / Annishinabe	Assiniboine / Nakoda, Nakona	Crow / Apsáokwiche
Kootenai / Ksanka	Plains Cree / Ne-i-yah-wahk	Sioux / Lakota, Dakota	Little Shell / Chippewa

Reservation Lands in Montana, and American Indian Tribes based on those lands

Blackfeet Reservation: Blackfeet	Crow Reservation: Crow
Fort Belknap Reservation: Gros Ventre and Assiniboine	Fort Peck Reservation: Assiniboine and Sioux
Rocky Boy's Reservation: Chippewa Cree	Landless, but headquartered in Cascade County: Little Shell Band of Chippewa

* Boundaries shown on this map reflect the demarcation of territories by non-Indian officials at treaty time, and do not necessarily accurately represent tribal territories occupied in the 1850s.



Plants of the Northern Cheyenne

Abies lasiocarpa
Subalpine Fir

Uses:

- Incense to ward off spirits causing illness and rejuvenate spirits approaching death
- Smoke used in ceremony to purify the body



Hierochloe odorata
Sweetgrass

Uses:

- Burned as purification incense during ceremonies like the Sacred Arrow and Sun Dance
- Burned in homes to ward off evil
- Smoke used as purification on weapons prior to battle



Glycyrrhiza lepidota
American Licorice

Uses:

- Tea for treatment of stomach maladies
- Eaten raw
- Roots chewed as a coolant during the Sun Dance and in the Sweat Lodge



Other Notable Plants of the Northern Cheyenne

- Giant Blazing Star (*Mentzelia laevicaulis*)- Medicine
- Beebalm (*Monarda fistulosa*)- Cosmetics, Ceremony
- Lavender Hyssop (*Agastache foeniculum*)- Medicine
- Red Raspberry (*Rubus idaeus*)- Food
- Rocky Mountain Juniper (*Juniperus scopulorum*)- Ceremony, Medicine, Tools
- Wiregrass (*Juncus balticus*)- Tools
- Great Plains Yucca (*Yucca glauca*)- Cosmetics, Medicine, Tools



Additional Resources

- The Crow Tribe's Knowledge of Local Plants; Jesse Wolff
- “Recovering our Roots: The Importance of Salish Ethnobotanical Knowledge and Traditional Food Systems to Community Wellbeing on the Flathead Indian Reservation in Montana”; Mitchell Rose Bear Don't Walk
- Montana Native Plants and Early Peoples; Jeff Hart
- Blackfoot Indian utilization of the flora of the northwestern Great Plains; Alex Johnston
- Prehistoric Plant Use at Beaver Creek Rock Shelter, Southwestern Montana, U.S.A; Dexter et al.
- Payne Family Native American Center Ethnobotany Garden.
<https://hs.umt.edu/nativegarden/>