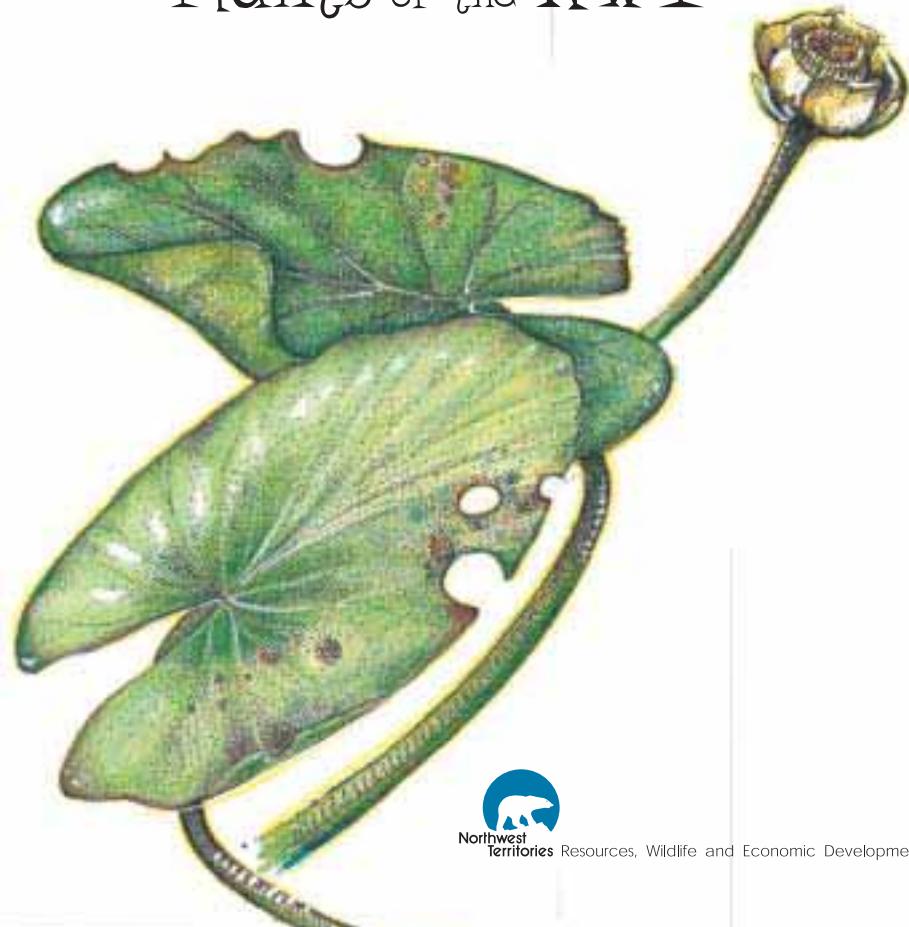


Wild AND Wacky Plants of the NWT



Northwest Territories Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development

Wild AND Wacky

Plants of the NWT



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Written by
Alexandra Milburn

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Introduction

Wild and Wacky Plants of the NWT will introduce you to 35 plants that grow in the Northwest Territories. Talk to an elder, your parents, your teachers or a librarian to find out which plants grow near your community. They may know other facts about these plants, other ways they can be used, or their names in the local Aboriginal language.

How to Use This Book

If you are looking for a particular plant, look for the page number in the table of contents. The plants are listed by their common names. Their scientific names are included on the plant pages.

If you are just flipping through the book, you can stop at any plant that interests you. There are lots of activities and recipes you can try. There are lots of wacky facts and even some jokes!

Be Plant Smart

Never eat any part of any plant unless a knowledgeable adult tells you it's okay.



Never pick more plants than you need. Leave enough plants or berries behind so that new plants will grow next year.



Have fun learning about the wild and wacky plants of the NWT. There are many hundreds more out there for you to discover!

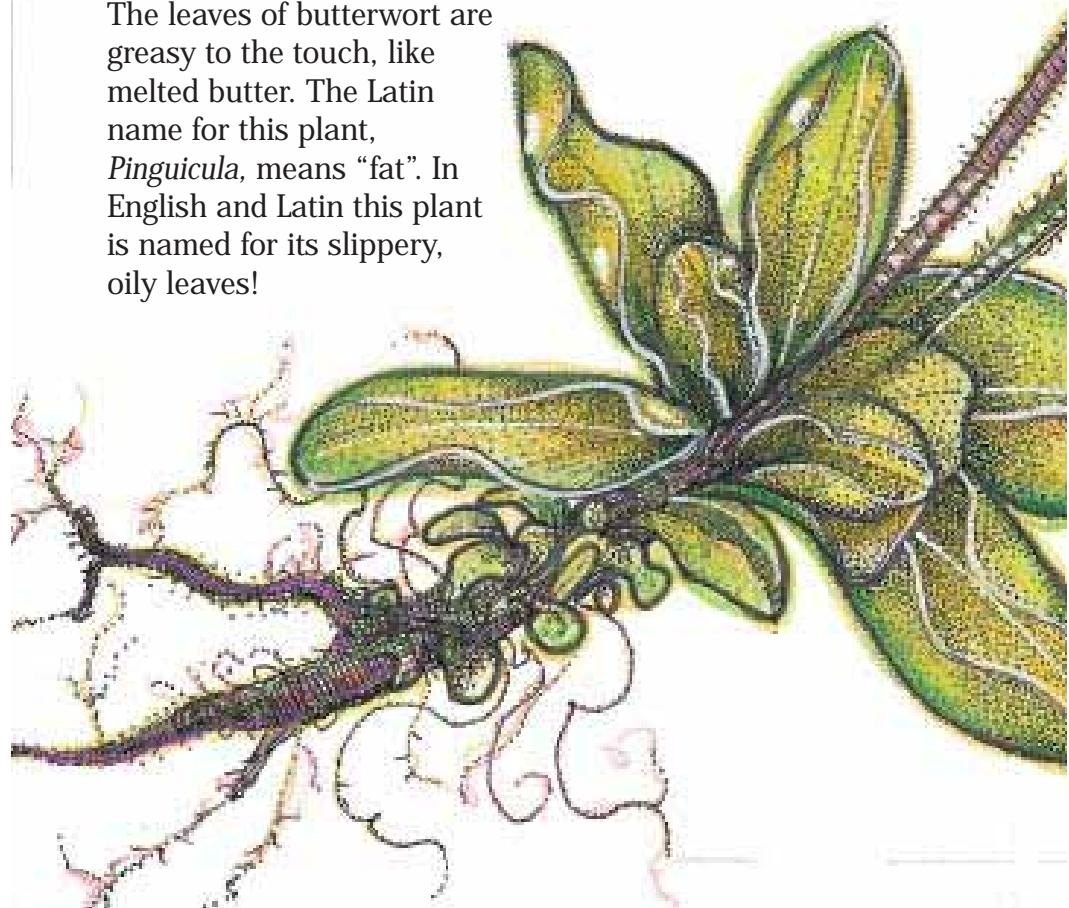
Butterwort

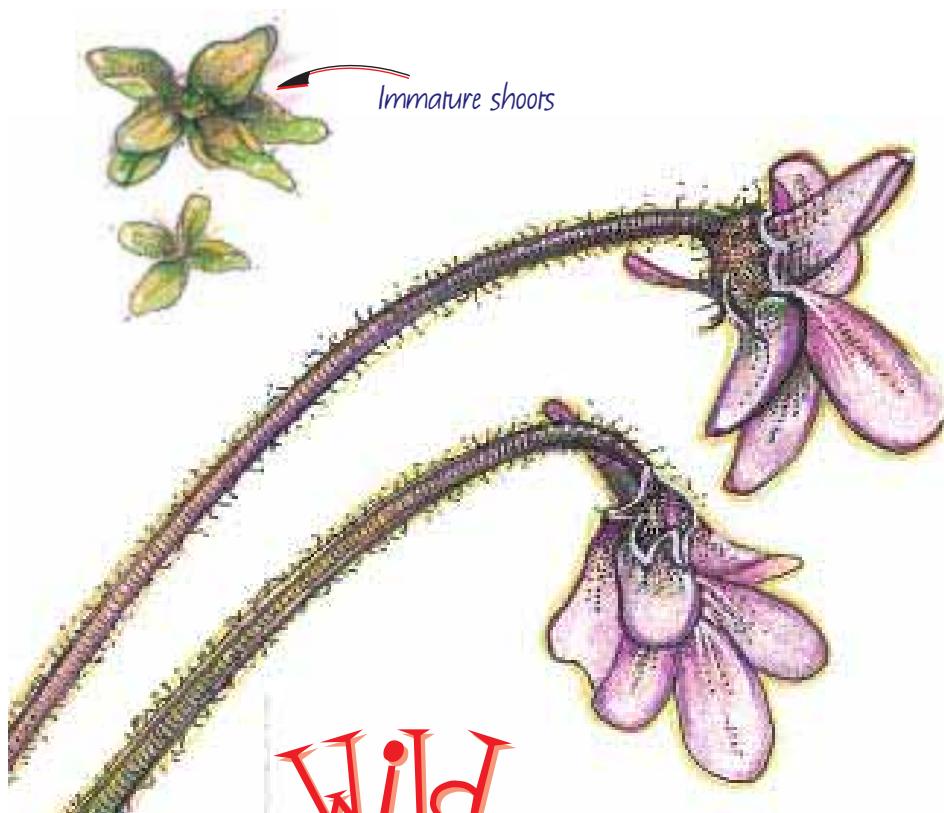
Pinguicula vulgaris

Butterwort grows in damp, gravelly or sandy soils by the edges of small brooks, ponds or wet areas. Small and delicate, butterwort looks like a purple violet. Yellowish-green leaves grow at the base of the stem.

Wacky

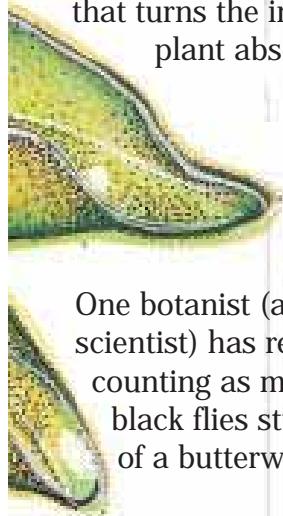
These leaves are greasy!
The leaves of butterwort are greasy to the touch, like melted butter. The Latin name for this plant, *Pinguicula*, means "fat". In English and Latin this plant is named for its slippery, oily leaves!



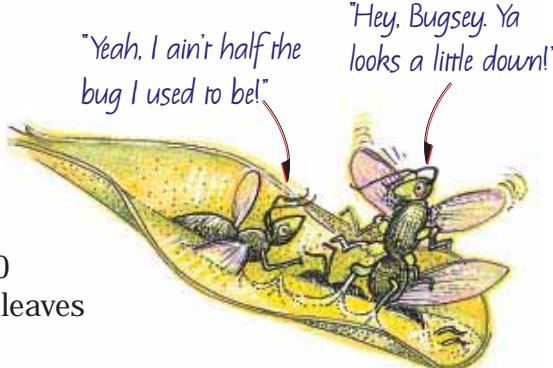


Wild

Insects become trapped on the slimy leaves, and as they struggle to get free, the plant releases a substance that turns the insects into a liquid. The plant absorbs this liquid as food.



One botanist (a plant scientist) has reported counting as many as 500 black flies stuck to the leaves of a butterwort.

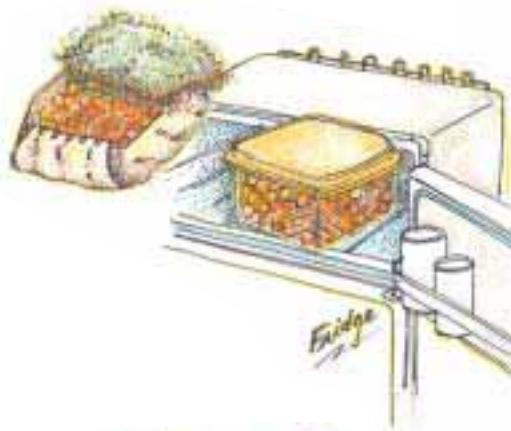


Cloudberry

Rubus chamaemorus

Cloudberry grows close to the ground in moist areas of bog and peat throughout the NWT. It is one of the earliest plants to bloom in the spring, putting forth large, five-petaled white flowers as soon as the ground warms up. After the petals fall off, a bright red berry forms. When the berry turns golden, it is ripe and ready to eat.

At one time, many Aboriginal peoples stored cloudberries in baskets beneath the moss to keep them cool.



Try This!

If you can collect enough cloudberries, why not try storing them the traditional way, in baskets, and in the fridge. Which taste better?



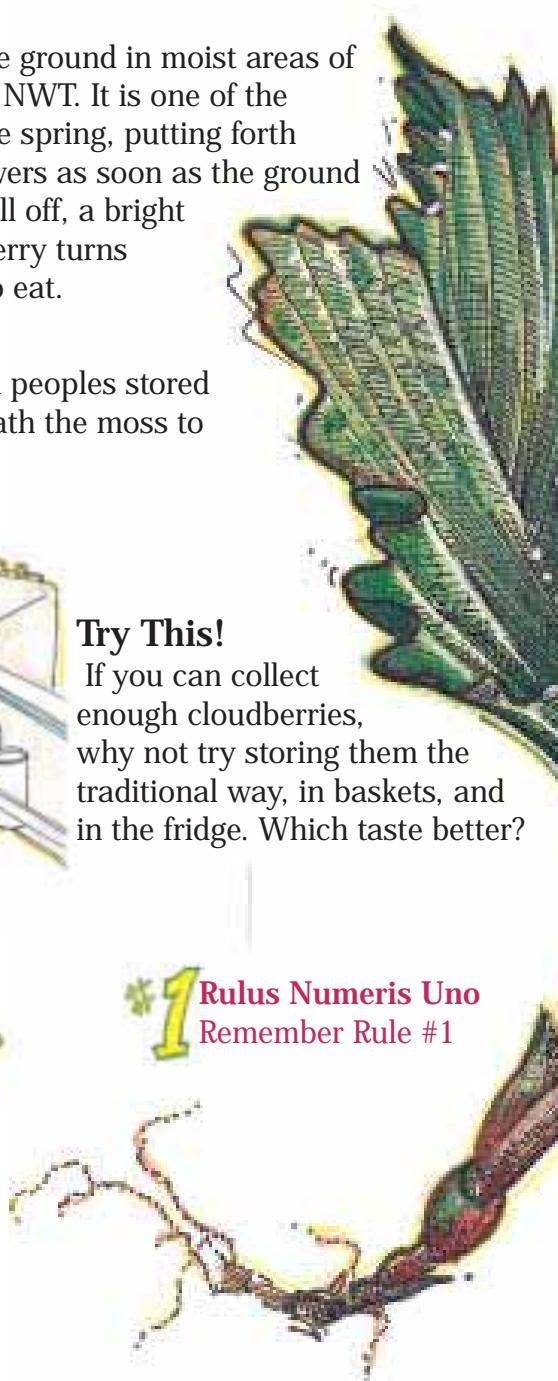
Cloudberries are delicious with milk and sugar, in jam, jelly or pies, or fresh off the plant.



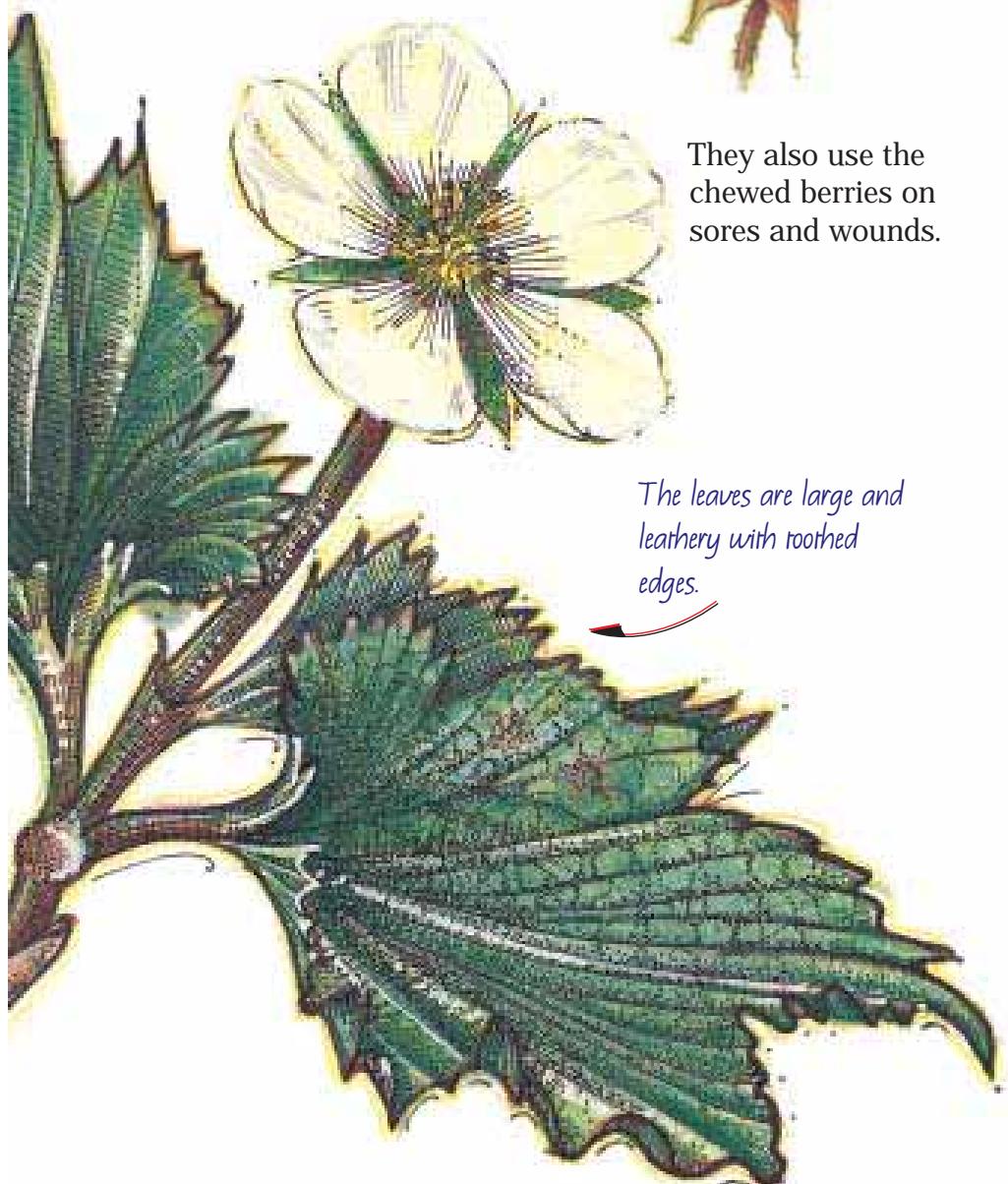
Rulus Numeris Uno

Remember Rule #1

4 Wildflowers



The Dogrib boil the cloudberry flower and apply the tea to sore eyes.



They also use the chewed berries on sores and wounds.

The leaves are large and leathery with rothred edges.

Common Plantain

Plantago major

Common plantain grows as a weed near many settled areas in the North. The leaves have five to seven obvious ribs. The stems are 30 cm long with a dense narrow spike of tiny, yellowish white flowers. Look around your doorway or yard; there's a good chance plantain is growing there.

Wacky

Seeds from this plant have lain dormant for as long as 40 years and then sprouted between the cracks of a sidewalk



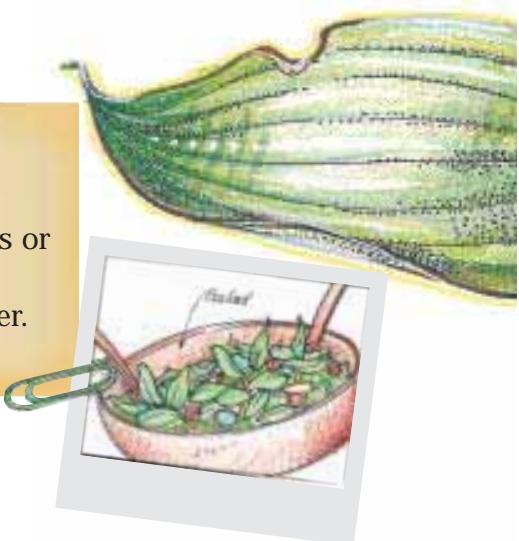
Another name for plantain is “white man’s foot” because everywhere settlers walked, the plant sprung up.



Rulus Numeris Uno
Remember Rule #1

Plantain Salad

1. Pick young plantain leaves early in spring.
2. Mix with other salad greens or wild greens like dandelion.
3. Add tomatoes and cucumber.
4. Toss with vinegar and oil.

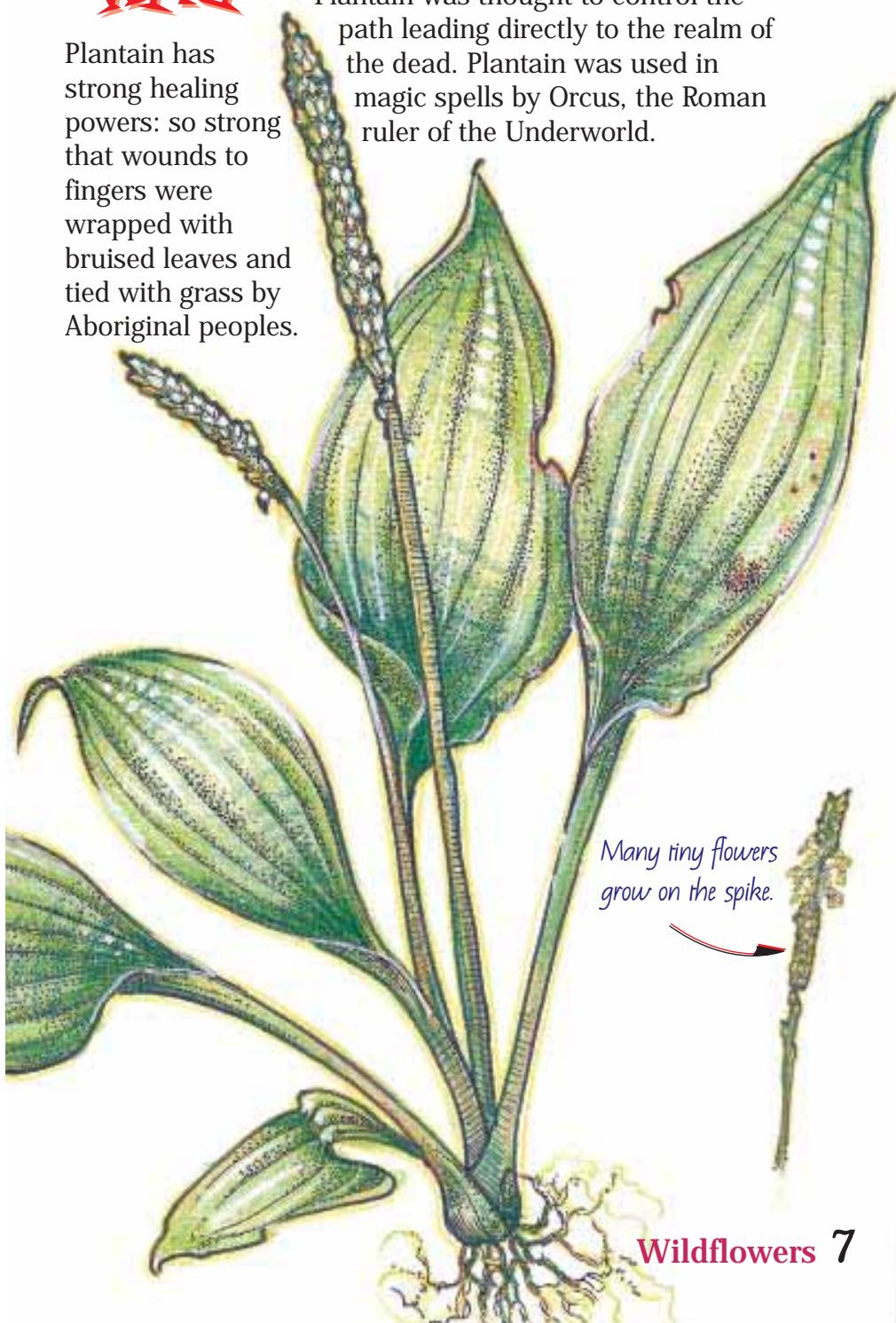


6 Wildflowers

Wild

Plantain has strong healing powers: so strong that wounds to fingers were wrapped with bruised leaves and tied with grass by Aboriginal peoples.

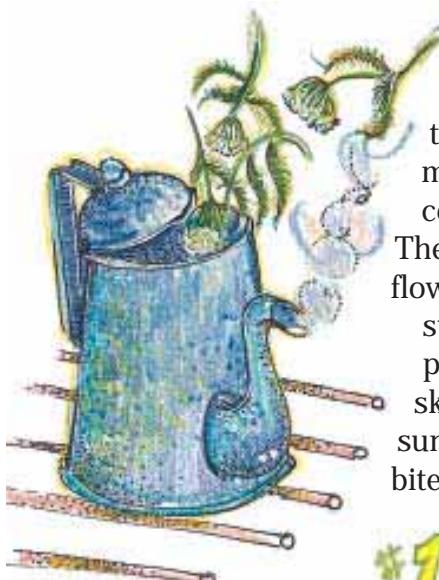
Plantain was thought to control the path leading directly to the realm of the dead. Plantain was used in magic spells by Orcus, the Roman ruler of the Underworld.



Common Yarrow

Achillea millefolium

Common yarrow grows in dry and open areas. It is topped by large, flat, flower clusters. Each tiny flower is yellow in the centre. The leaves are divided into many parts. Yarrow has a tough and woolly stem.



The Gwich'in use the whole plant to make a tea for coughs or ulcers. They also use the flowers in a drink to stop nosebleeds. The plant can be used for skin infections, sunburns and insect bites.



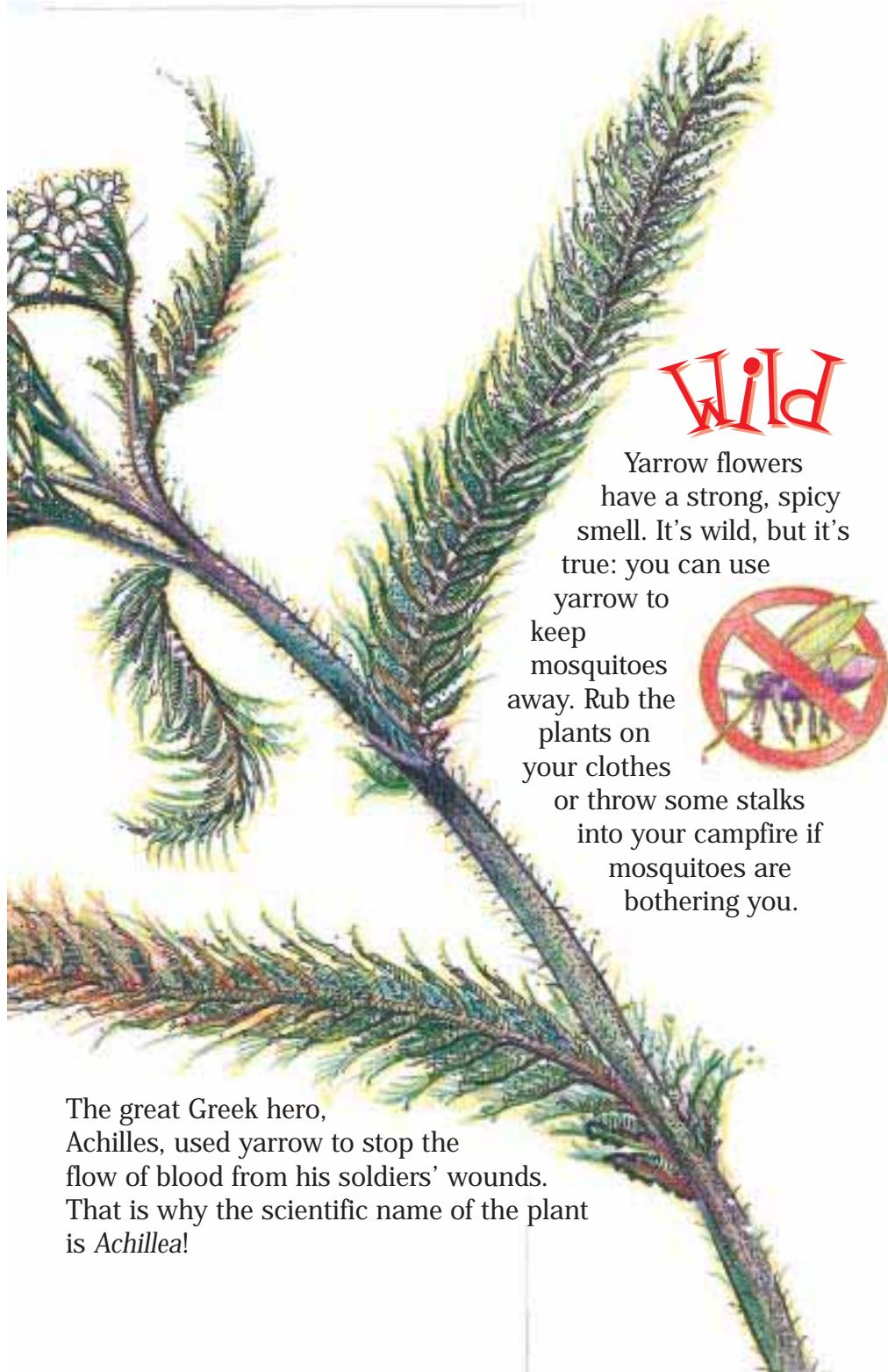
Rulus Numeris Uno
Remember Rule #1

Drying Wild Plants

Plants like yarrow are easy to preserve by drying.

1. Select some plants and hang them upside down from a line in a dark, dry place, like a closet.
2. Leave them for several days until they feel stiff and dry.
3. Put in a jar or vase. Add some wild grasses and other dried flowers. These arrangements make nice gifts.





Wild

Yarrow flowers have a strong, spicy smell. It's wild, but it's true: you can use yarrow to keep mosquitoes away. Rub the plants on your clothes or throw some stalks into your campfire if mosquitoes are bothering you.



The great Greek hero, Achilles, used yarrow to stop the flow of blood from his soldiers' wounds. That is why the scientific name of the plant is *Achillea*!

Fireweed

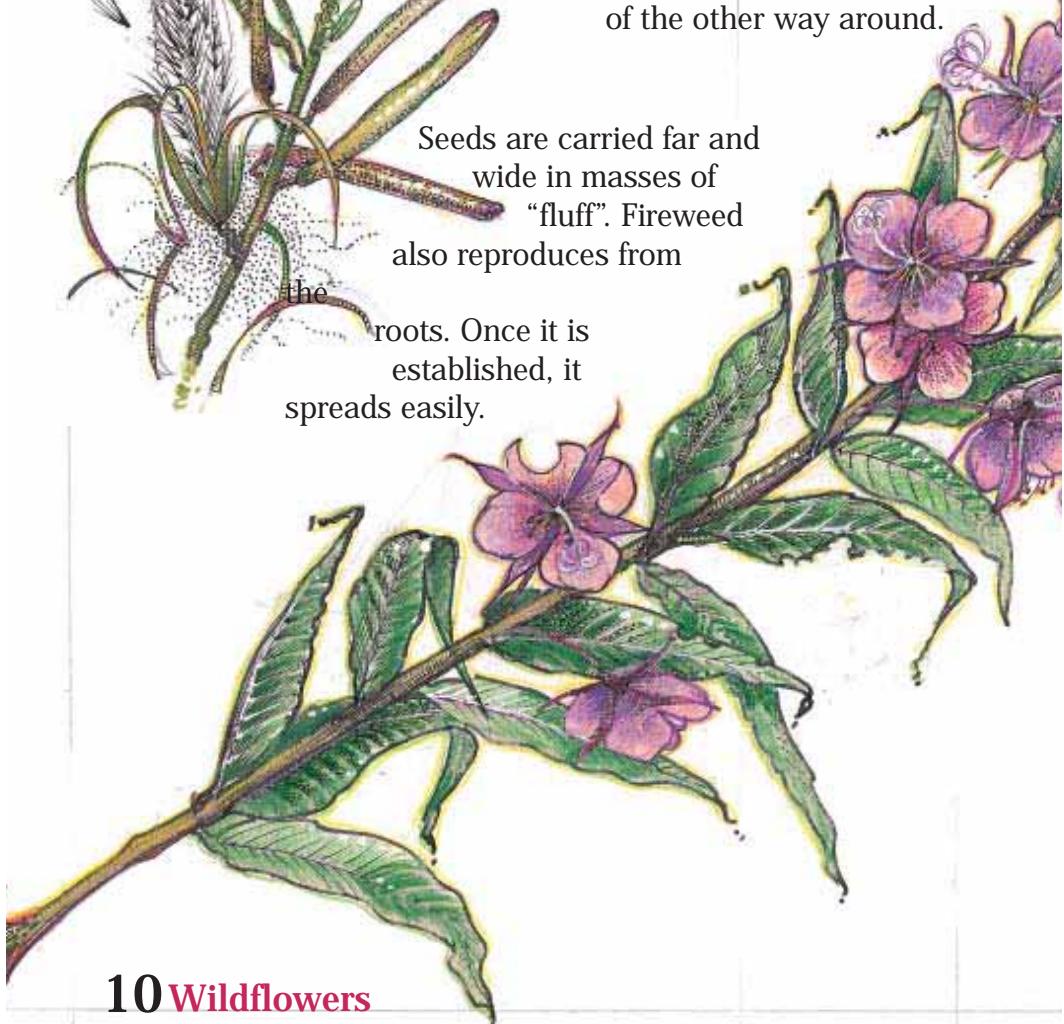
Chamerion angustifolium

Fireweed grows just about everywhere in the NWT: along roadsides, ditches, in recently burned areas and on the tundra. Fireweed has long, narrow leaves that look like willow leaves. The flowers are bright pink and grow on a long stalk.

Wacky

Fireweed blooms from the bottom of the stalk up, instead of the other way around.

Seeds are carried far and wide in masses of “fluff”. Fireweed also reproduces from the roots. Once it is established, it spreads easily.



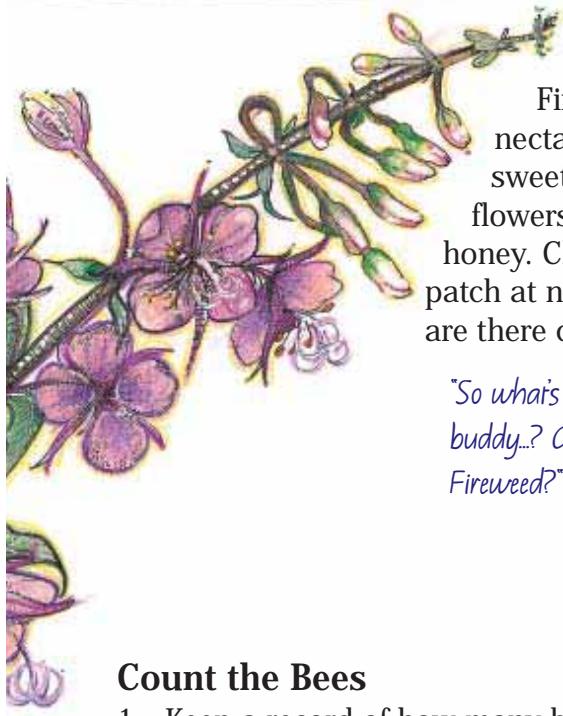
10 Wildflowers

Mixed with water and bear fat, fireweed has been used by the Sahtu Dene for rashes and other skin problems.



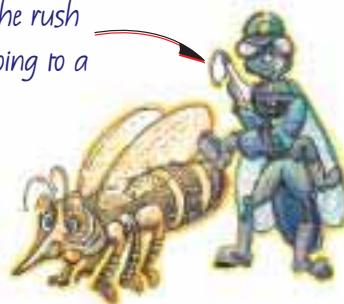
Rulus Numeris Uno Remember Rule #1

All parts of fireweed are edible. Leaves can be dried and used for tea; young shoots are good when cooked and used in a salad. Fireweed honey is dark and delicious.



Fireweed produces most of its nectar at noon. Nectar is the sweetish liquid produced by many flowers, which bees use to make honey. Check your local fireweed patch at noon to see how many bees are there collecting nectar.

*"So what's the rush
buddy...? Going to a
Fireweed?"*



Count the Bees

1. Keep a record of how many bees you see at a particular stand of fireweed during the day.
2. Observe the plants at 10:00 in the morning, at noon and at 4:00 in the afternoon.
3. Do this for three days.
4. When do most of the bees visit?

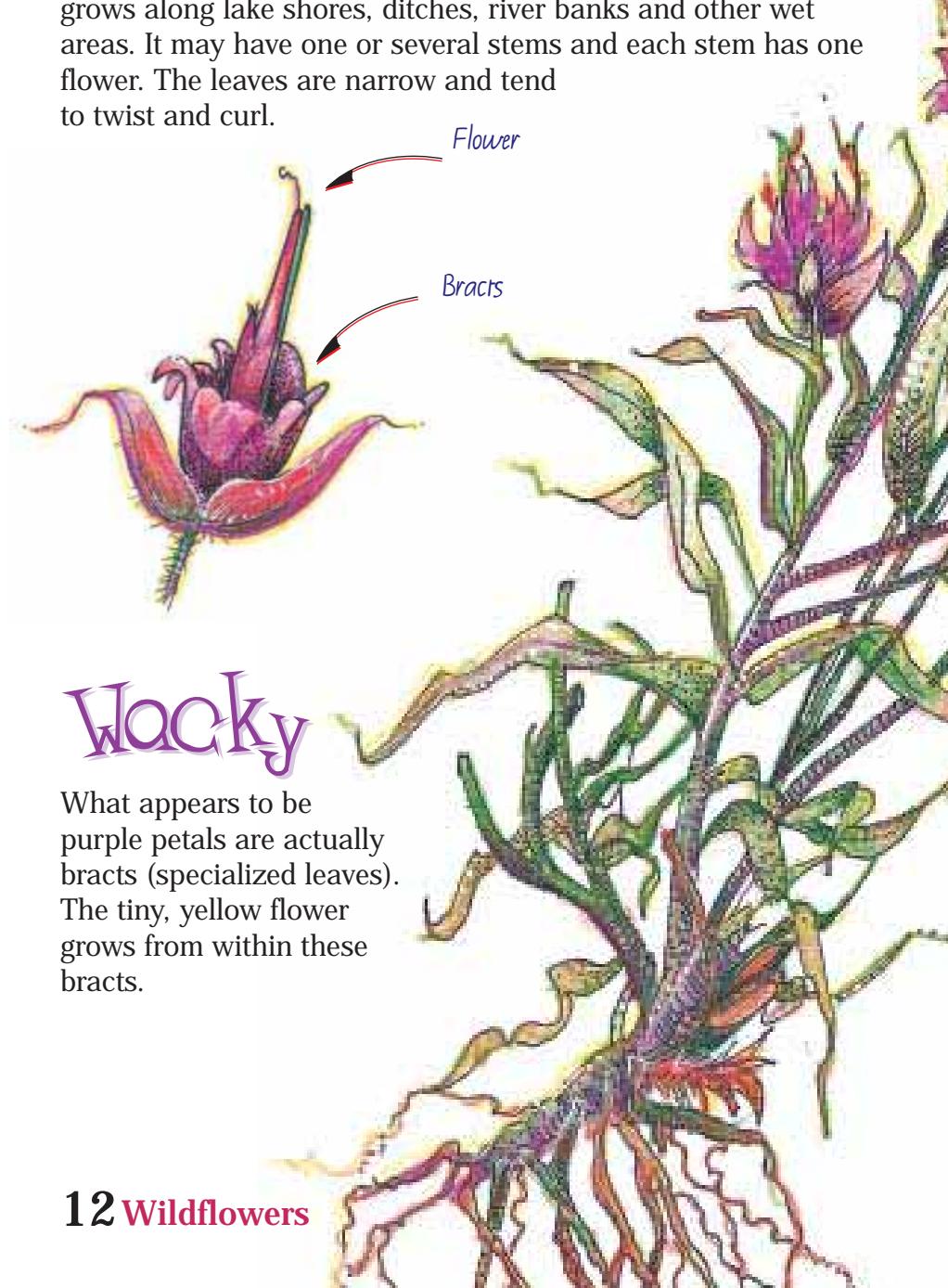
Number of Bees Seen

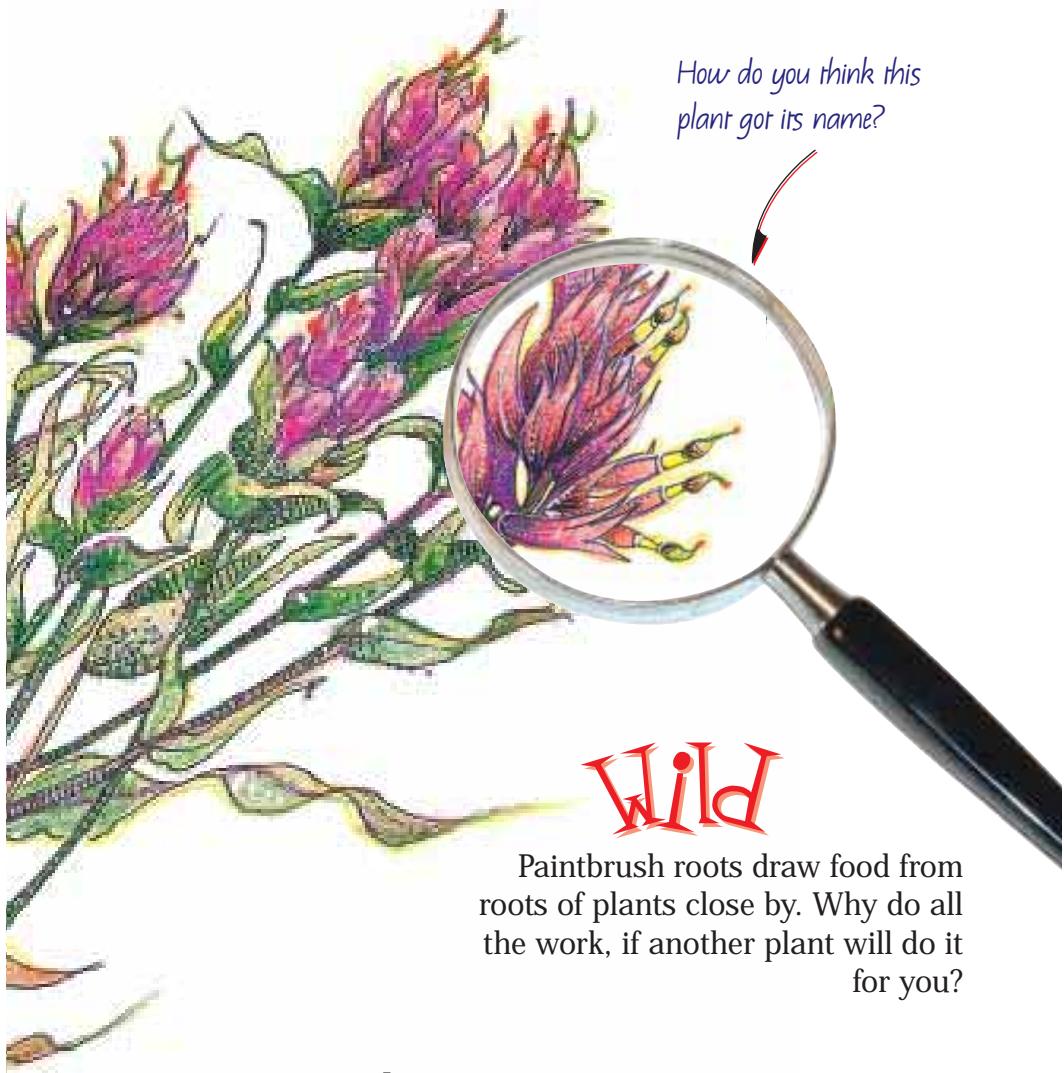


Indian Paintbrush

Castilleja raupii

Indian paintbrush is a beautiful, purple-flowered plant that grows along lake shores, ditches, river banks and other wet areas. It may have one or several stems and each stem has one flower. The leaves are narrow and tend to twist and curl.





Invent Your Own Flower

There are many, many wild plants in the world. They may be big or small, tall or short, pretty or ugly, stinky or sweet. But, there is one plant missing: the one you invent yourself!

1. Make up your own flower.
2. Figure out where it grows, what is special about it, whether you can eat it, and what colour it is.
3. Make up a name for your flower.
4. Draw a picture of your flower and colour it.

Mountain Avens

Dryas integrifolia

Mountain avens is one of the first plants to grow in rocky or gravelly places where there are few other flowers. The leaves are small and leathery with white hairs on the undersides; the white flowers have eight to ten petals.

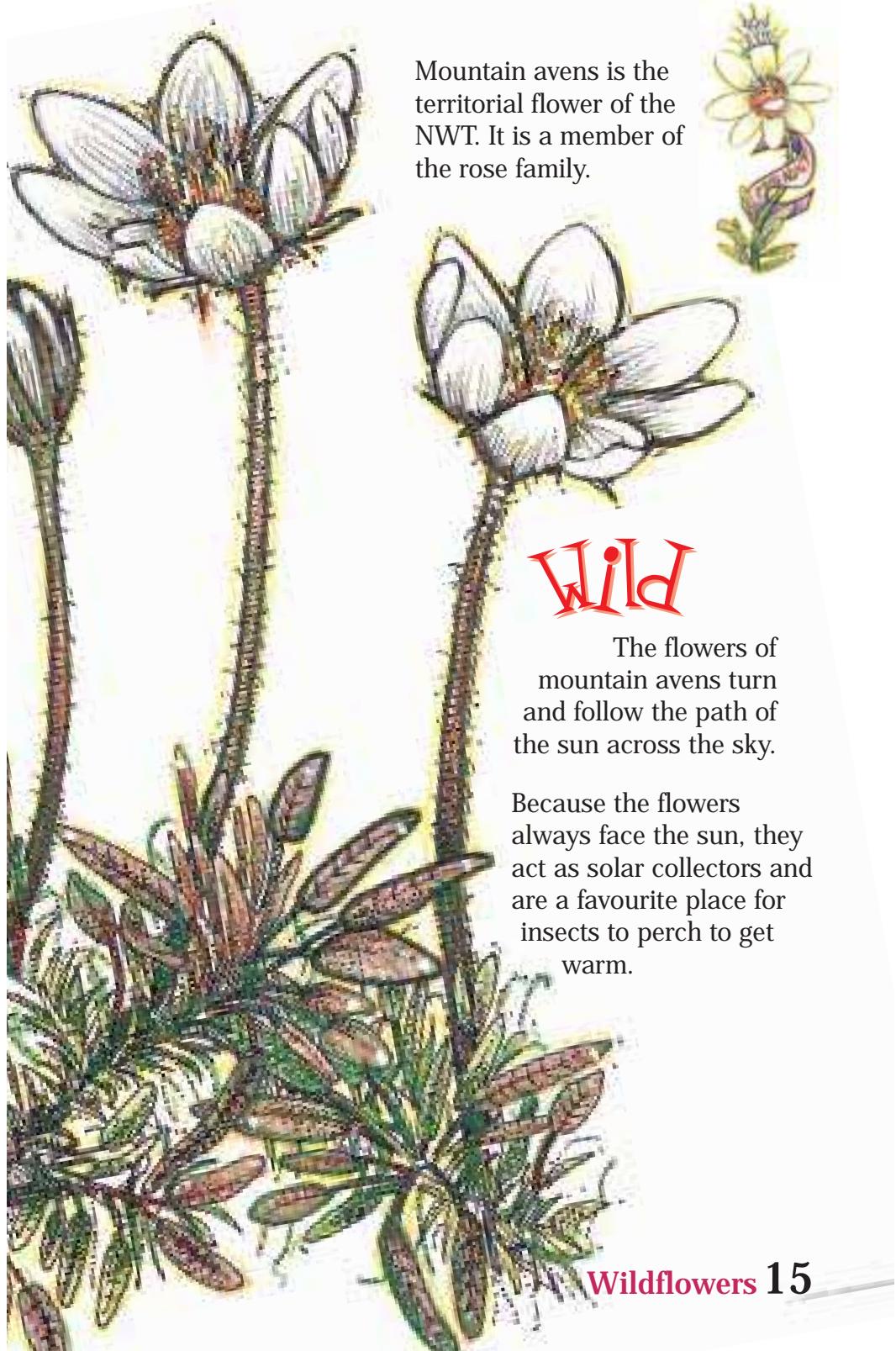
Mountain avens blooms early in the season. The blooms are replaced by tufted seed heads that blow off with the wind. Check your local gravel pit or river flats to see if they grow in your area. They can also be found on the tundra, but are quickly squeezed out by more aggressive plants.

Plants that are the first to grow in new areas are called “pioneers”. Like the people who were pioneers, they prepare the way for others to follow.

Official Plants

Each province and territory has an official flower and tree.

1. Draw a large map of Canada.
2. In an atlas, look up the names of the official flowers and trees.
3. Draw them on the map.
4. Quiz your friends to see who can guess them correctly!



Mountain avens is the territorial flower of the NWT. It is a member of the rose family.

Wild

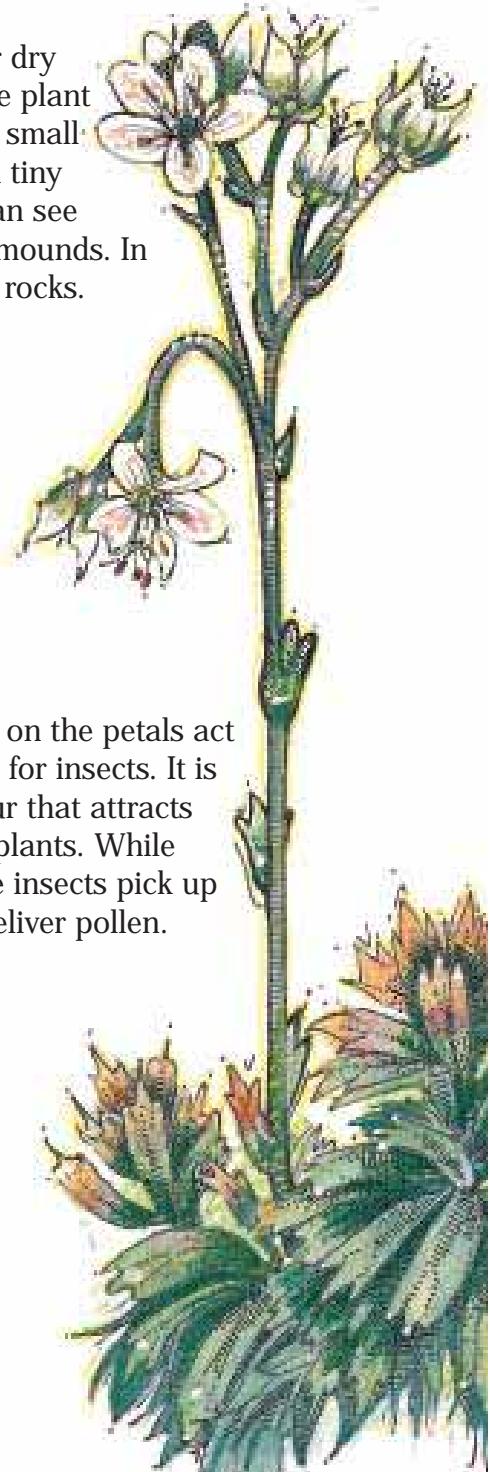
The flowers of mountain avens turn and follow the path of the sun across the sky.

Because the flowers always face the sun, they act as solar collectors and are a favourite place for insects to perch to get warm.

Prickly Saxifrage

Saxifraga tricuspidata

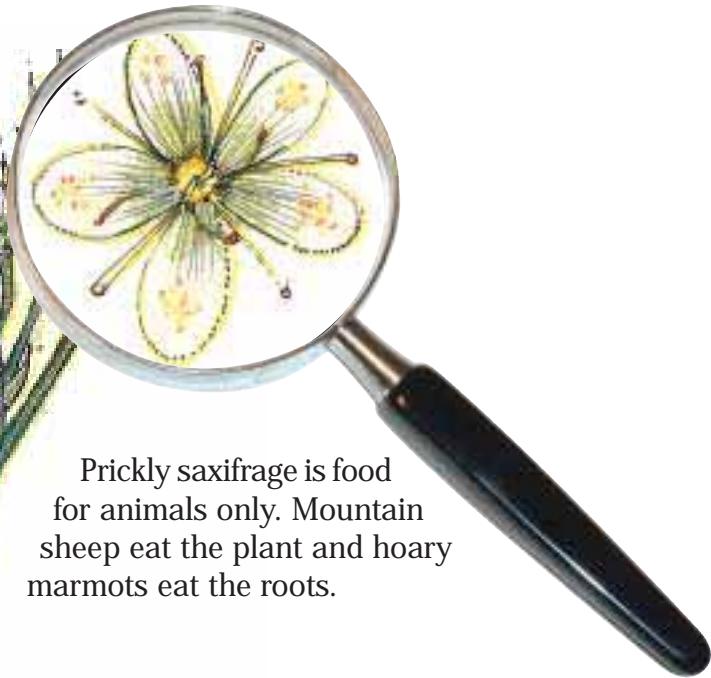
Prickly saxifrage grows in rocky or dry areas. The leaves at the base of the plant each have three prickly lobes. The small white flowers have five petals with tiny orange dots. In some areas, you can see prickly saxifrage growing in large mounds. In other places, single plants cling to rocks.



Wild

The orange dots on the petals act as landing lights for insects. It is the orange colour that attracts them to the plants. While there, the insects pick up and deliver pollen.





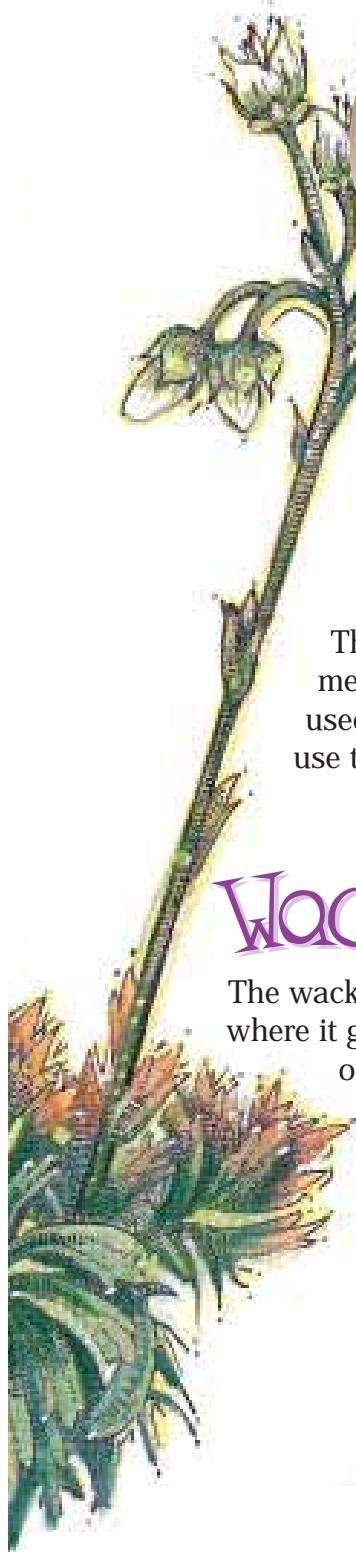
Prickly saxifrage is food for animals only. Mountain sheep eat the plant and hoary marmots eat the roots.

This plant at one time was used for medicine. Even the ancient Romans used it, but it is not considered safe to use today.

 **Rulus Numeris Uno**
Remember Rule #1

Wacky

The wacky thing about this plant is where it grows! It looks like it's growing out of solid rock! If you look closely, you will see there is actually a small amount of soil on the rock for the plants to root in.



Red Baneberry

Actaea rubra

Red baneberry grows in moist meadows and sunny forest openings. It grows tall, up to one meter, and looks like a shrub with very large leaves. The bright red, glossy berries grow on a long stalk.

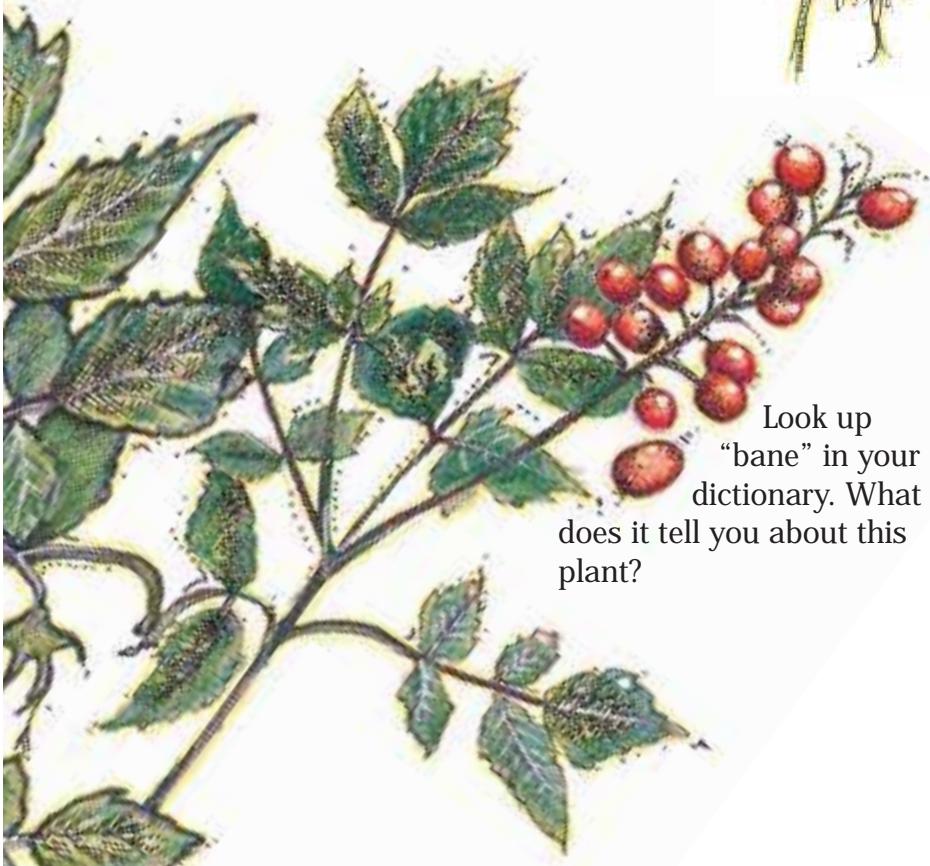
This is serious! The berries from this plant may look yummy, but they are extremely poisonous, just like all other parts of the plant. Even though birds or small animals eat the berries, it doesn't mean it's okay for people to eat them.

Some people may think that anything that comes from nature is good for you. That is not always true.

#1

Rulus Numeris Uno

Never eat any plant or berries
unless an adult can tell you
it's alright to do so.



Look up
“bane” in your
dictionary. What
does it tell you about this
plant?

It's hard to believe,
But it's true
This plant is really
Bad for you!



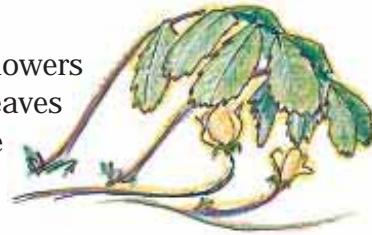
One little bite
and you might
say goodnight
FOREVER!

Silverweed

Potentilla anserina

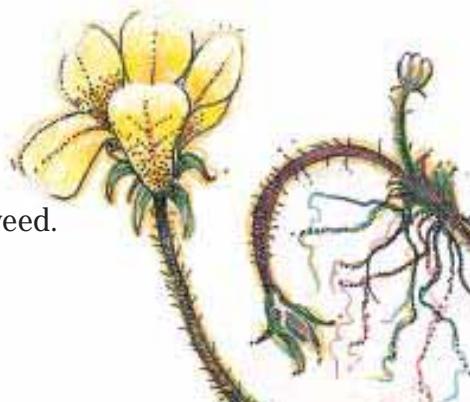
Silverweed grows on gravelly shores of rivers or lakes throughout the NWT. It has green leaves with silver undersides and long, reddish runners that creep along the ground, taking root as they go. The yellow flowers have five petals and are shaped like roses. Silverweed is easy to spot because the bright yellow of the flowers stands out against the dull background of the gravel.

When the weather turns bad, the flowers close halfway. When it rains, the leaves crowd together to form a protective roof over the fragile flowers.



Wild

Silverweed is a plant of legend. One legend tells us that fairies and spirits gather in the moonlight to chat and dance on the beautiful silvery arms of silverweed.

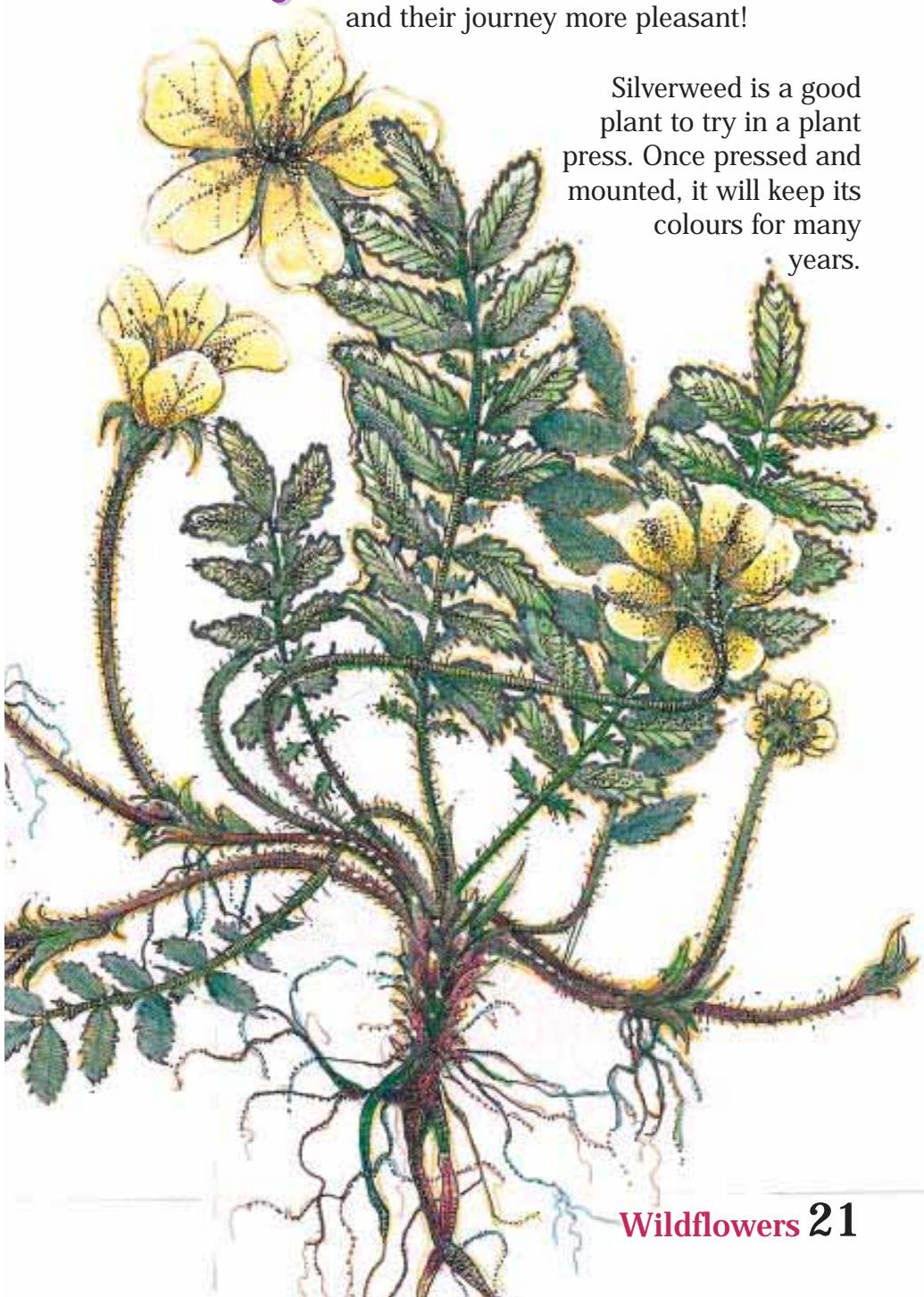


"Meet me at the silverweed
dance hall at midnight."

Wacky

At one time, travellers, soldiers and runners put silverweed in their shoes. They believed it would make their feet more comfortable and their journey more pleasant!

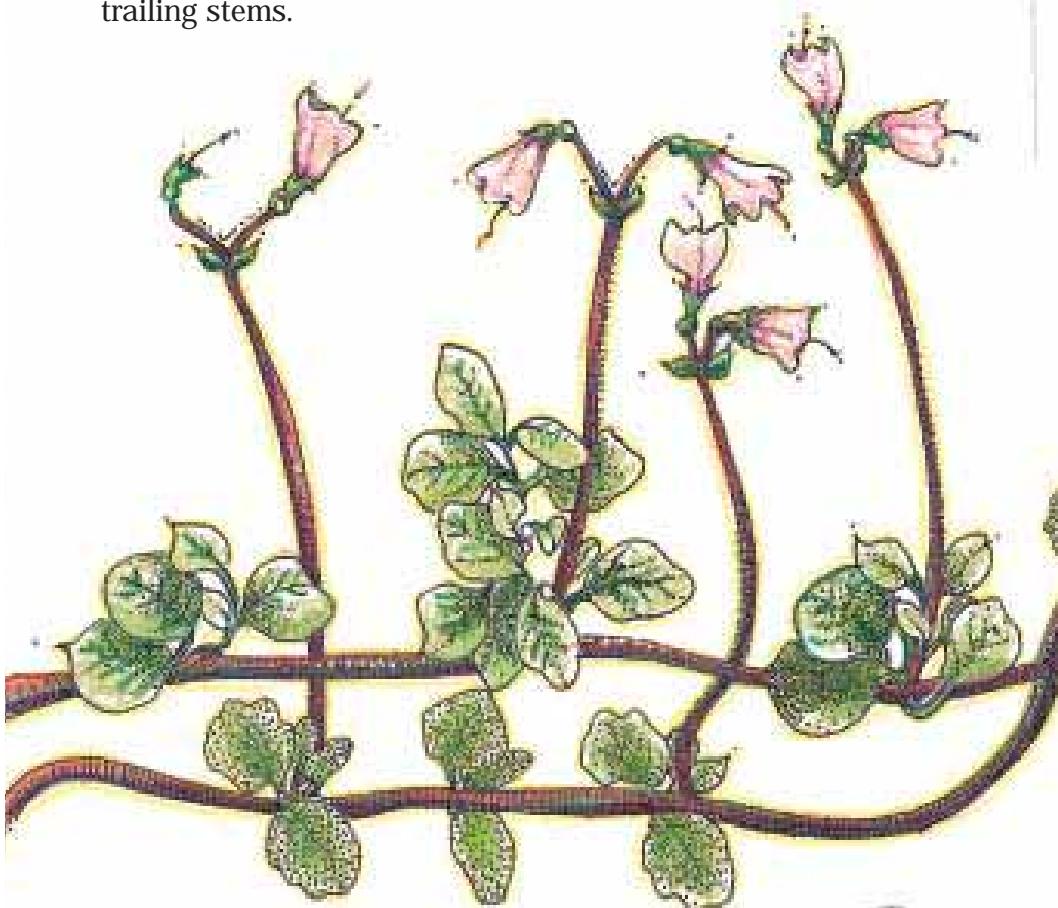
Silverweed is a good plant to try in a plant press. Once pressed and mounted, it will keep its colours for many years.



Twinflower

Linnaea borealis

Twinflower is a delicate and dainty plant that grows in forested areas and in some areas of tundra. Two nodding pink flowers grow from the two stalks of a forked stem. The flowers are sweetly scented. Small, blunt-tipped leaves grow along the trailing stems.



Linnaea borealis comes from Carolus Linnaeus (1707-1778), who classified and named plants. Twinflower was one of his favourites, so it was named after him. *Borealis* means northern.

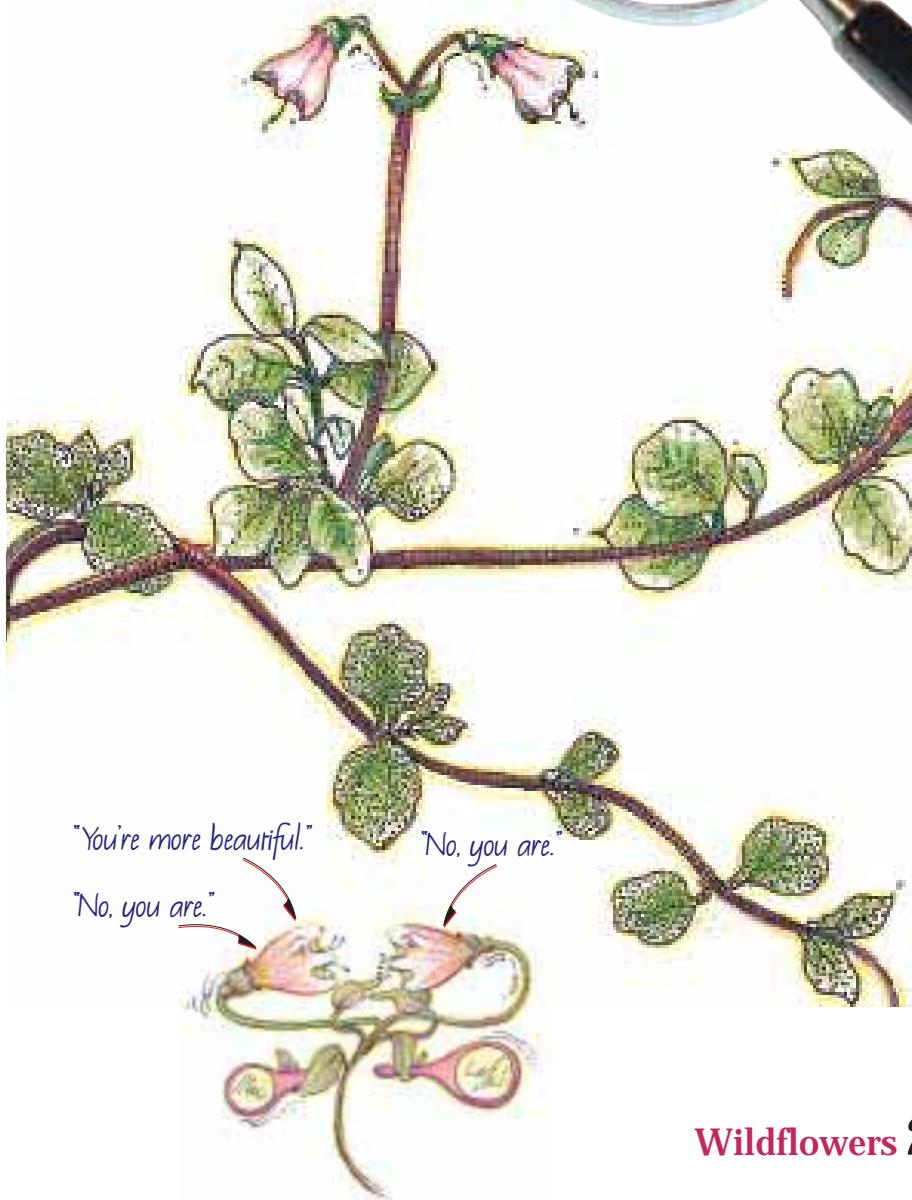


Linnaeus was a botanist

(a scientist who studies plants).

Wild

The fruit of twinflower is sticky burrs that attach to clothing or animals. This is how the seeds are spread.



Wild Mint

Mentha arvensis

Wild mint grows in meadows, moist ditches and along rivers and lakes. The stem is square and purplish. Mauve flowers grow where the leaves are attached to the stem.

Local Aboriginal groups use mint leaves to make tea or add them to regular tea. You can even buy mint tea in the grocery store now. Many people drink it to soothe their stomachs or calm a cold.



Mint Tea

Do this only with adult supervision.

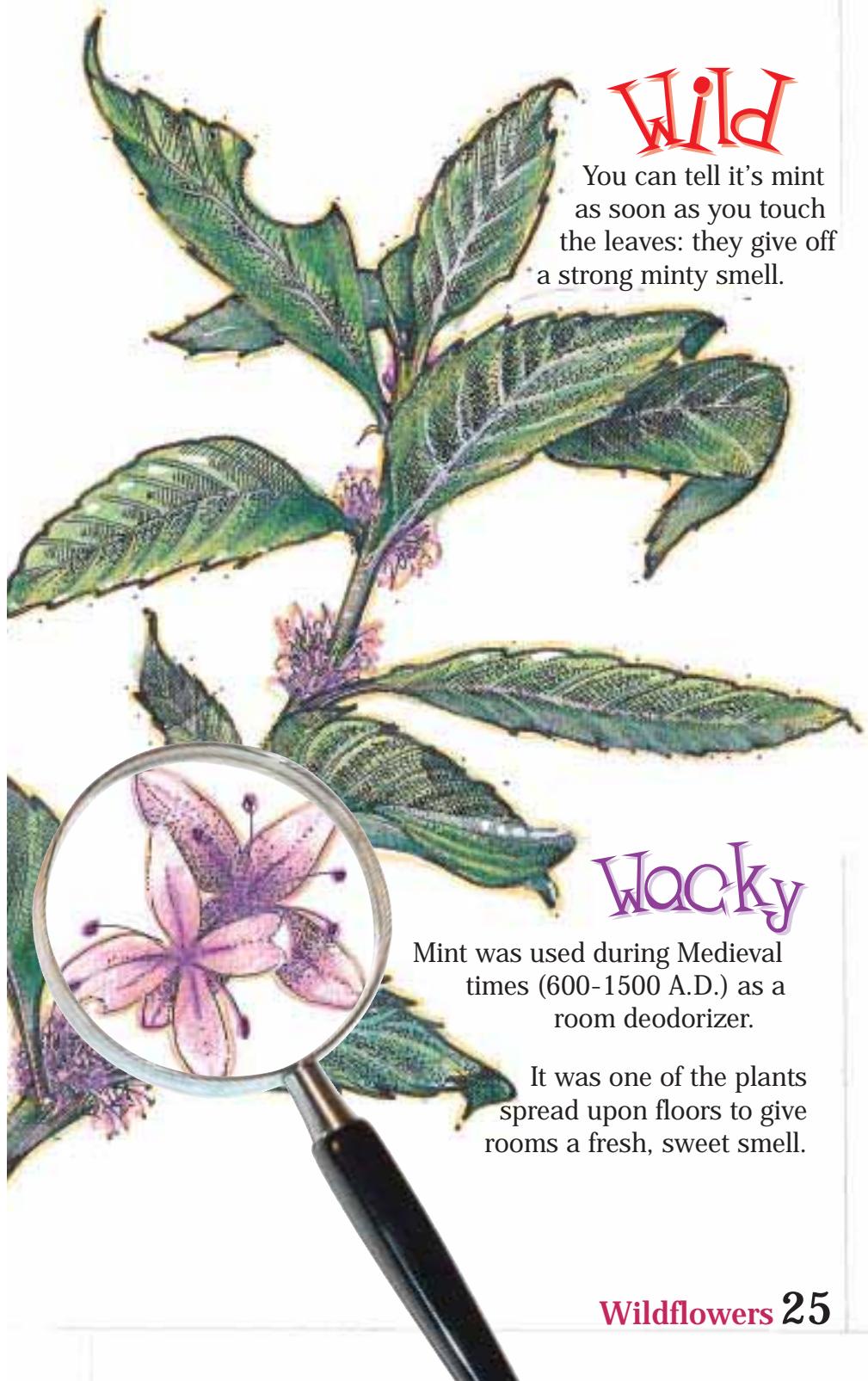
1. Pick a handful of mint leaves.
2. Boil a pot of fresh water.
3. Put the mint leaves into the pot.
4. After five minutes, pour the tea through a strainer.

In the summer, try mint tea as a cool drink by refrigerating and then adding ice cubes.



Rulus Numeris Uno

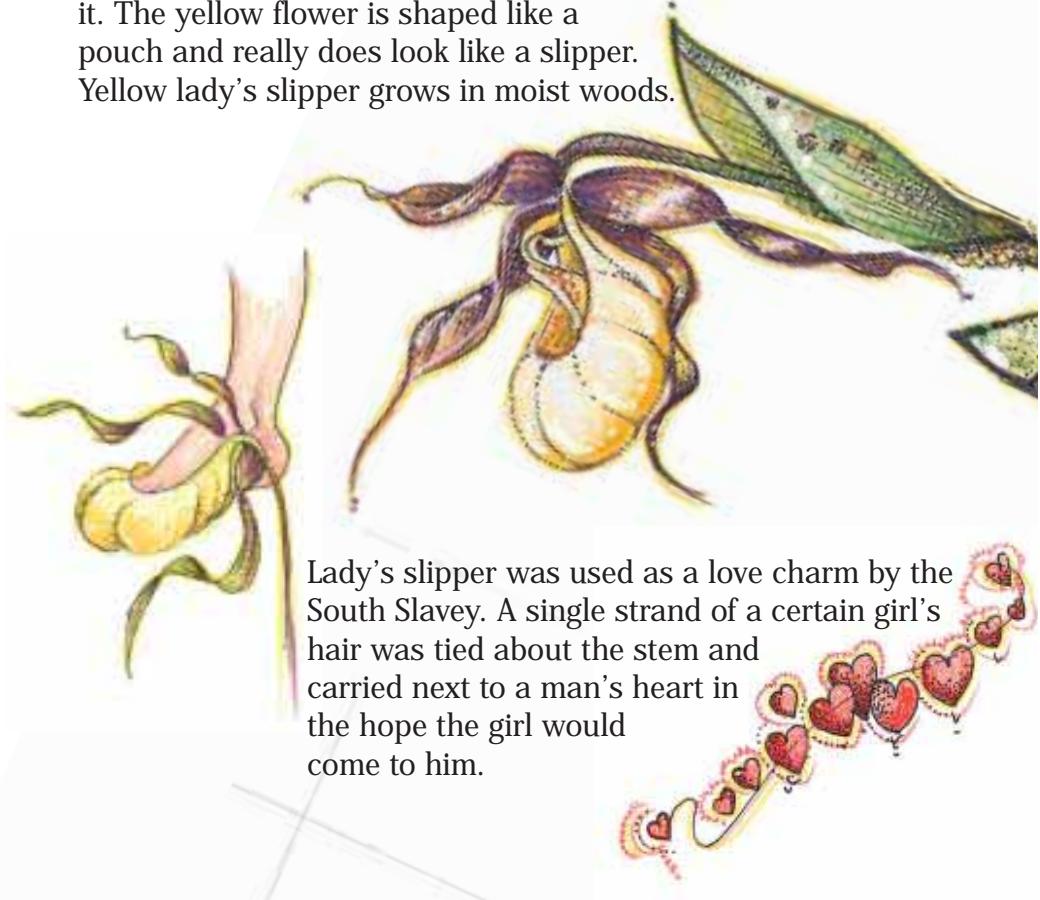
Remember Rule #1



Yellow Lady's Slipper

Cypripedium parviflorum

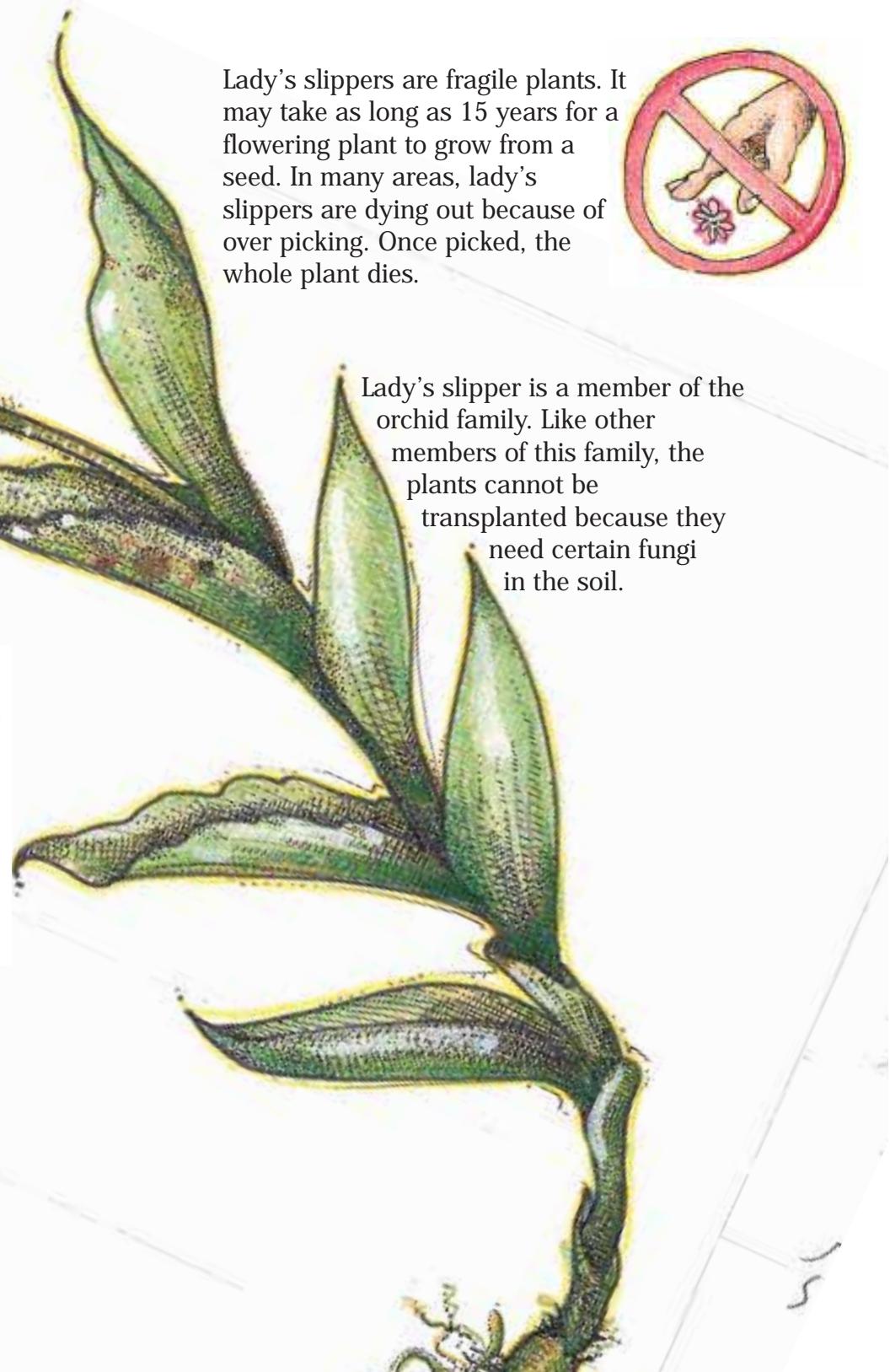
You will know lady's slipper the first time you see it. The yellow flower is shaped like a pouch and really does look like a slipper. Yellow lady's slipper grows in moist woods.



Lady's slipper was used as a love charm by the South Slavey. A single strand of a certain girl's hair was tied about the stem and carried next to a man's heart in the hope the girl would come to him.



The fragrance of lady's slipper attracts many bees. The bee enters through an opening at the top of the pouch and leaves through a tiny hole in the back. As the bee exits, it deposits pollen.



Lady's slippers are fragile plants. It may take as long as 15 years for a flowering plant to grow from a seed. In many areas, lady's slippers are dying out because of over picking. Once picked, the whole plant dies.



Lady's slipper is a member of the orchid family. Like other members of this family, the plants cannot be transplanted because they need certain fungi in the soil.

Cat-tail

Typha latifolia

Cat-tails grow in many places in the North. Cat-tails have a distinctive fuzzy "tail" at the tip of their dense, brown spikes. The tail is the male part of the plant, which turns golden when full of pollen. After the pollen is shed, the tail falls off, leaving the brown female spike.



Rulus Numeris Uno
Remember Rule #1

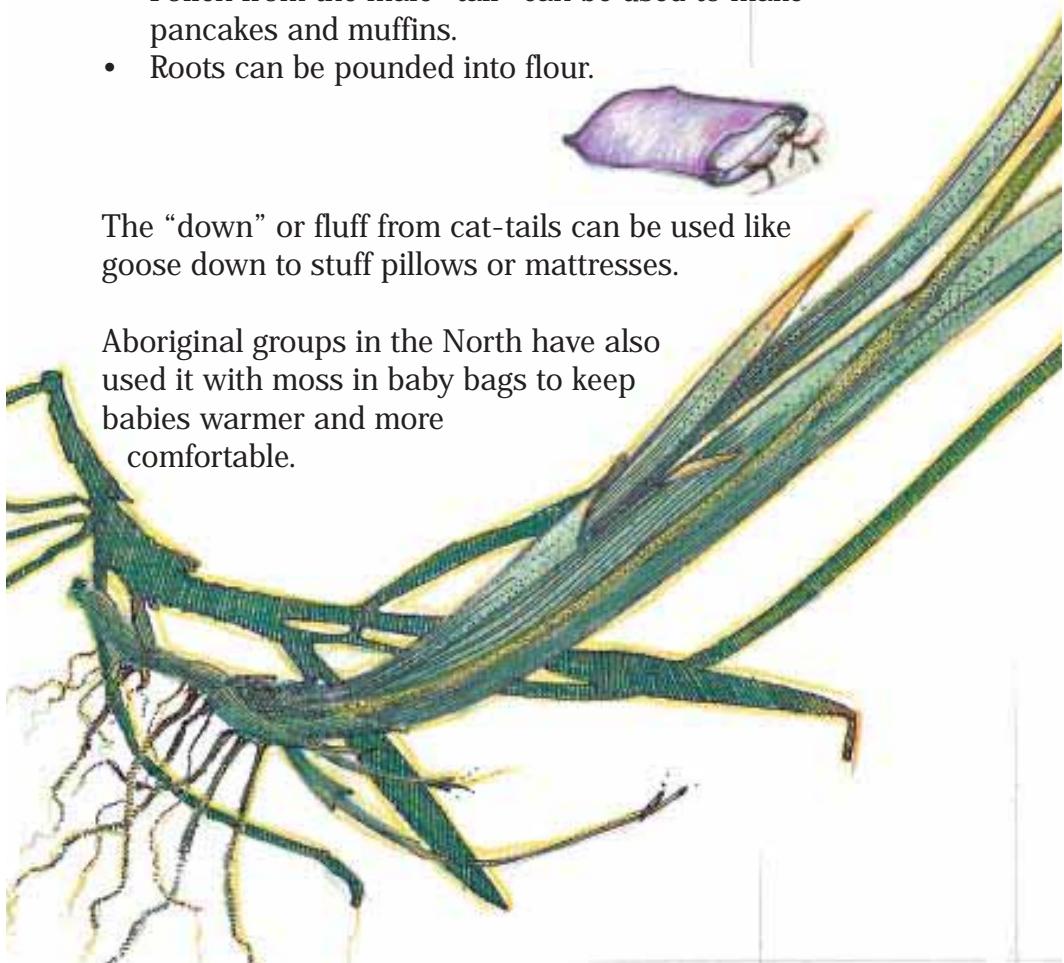
You can eat all parts of cat-tail as long as it is growing in a clean, natural marsh:

- Young spikes can be eaten like corn on the cob.
- Young shoots can be eaten as greens.
- Pollen from the male "tail" can be used to make pancakes and muffins.
- Roots can be pounded into flour.



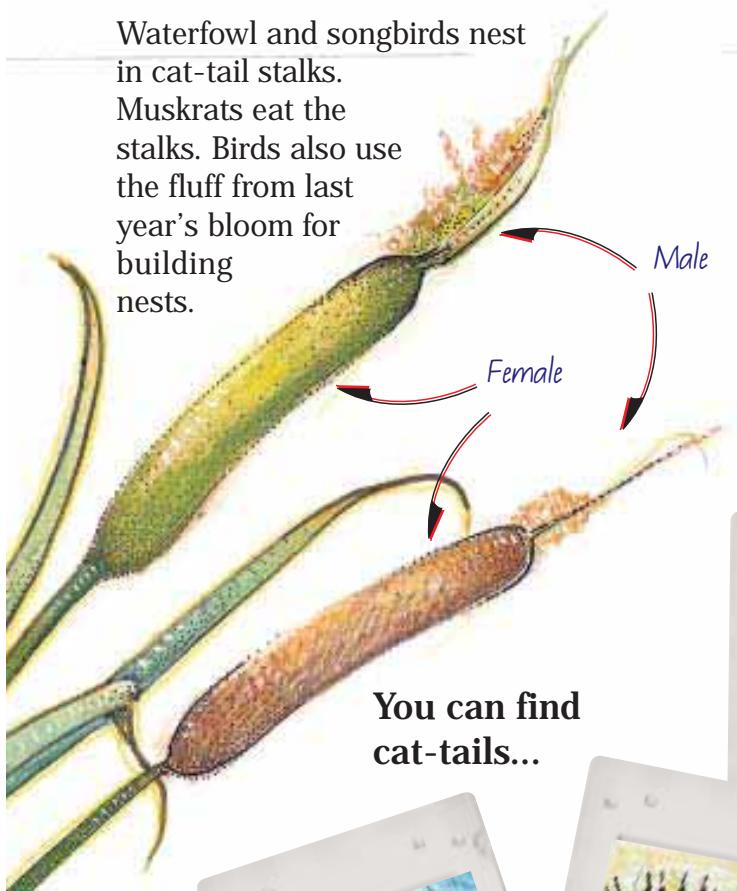
The "down" or fluff from cat-tails can be used like goose down to stuff pillows or mattresses.

Aboriginal groups in the North have also used it with moss in baby bags to keep babies warmer and more comfortable.



Waterfowl and songbirds nest in cat-tail stalks.

Muskrats eat the stalks. Birds also use the fluff from last year's bloom for building nests.



You can find cat-tails...



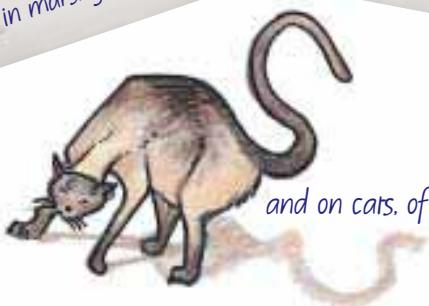
at the edge of ponds



in marshy areas



by streams and sloughs

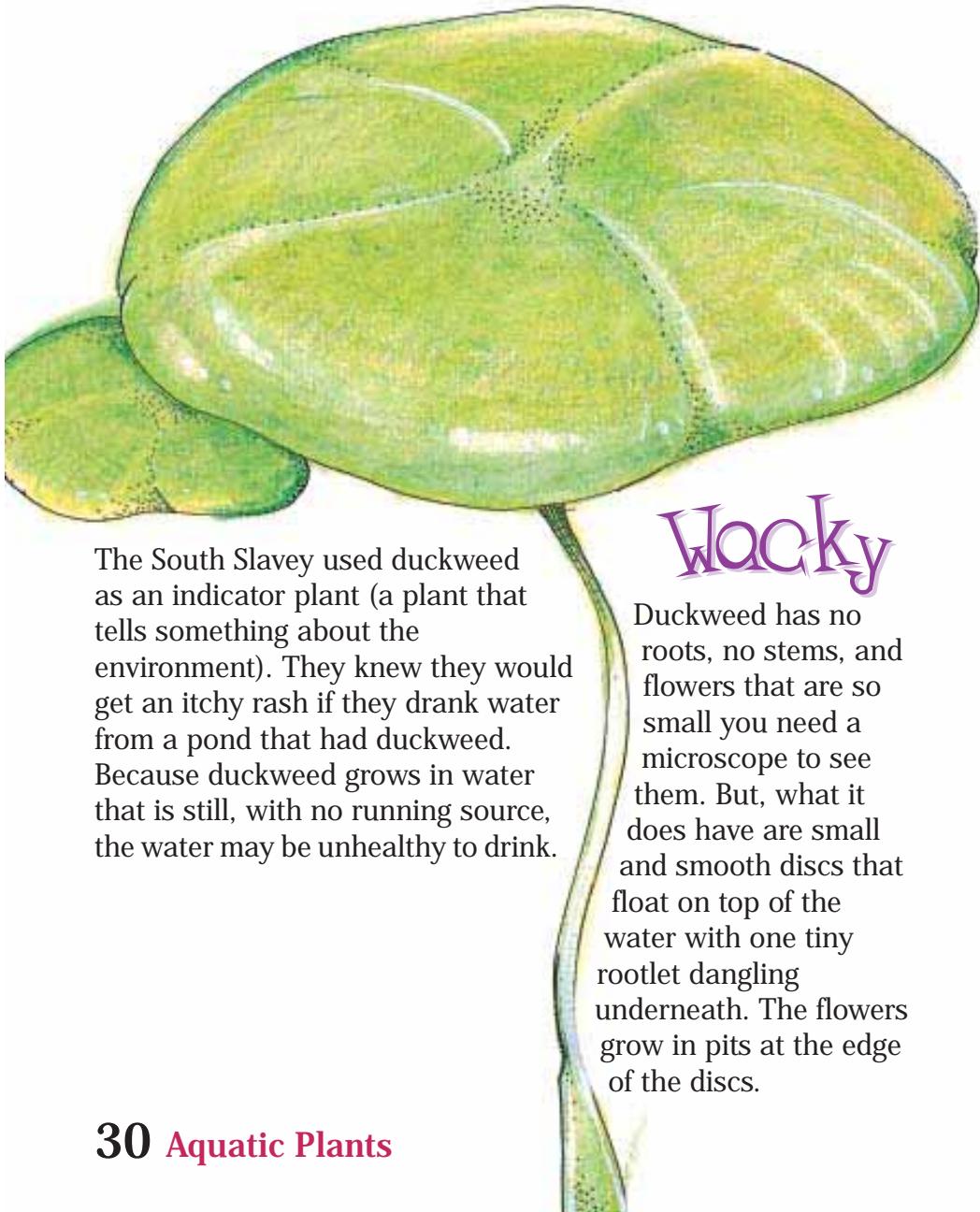


and on cats, of course!

Duckweed

Lemna minor

Duckweed is a tiny plant that grows on the surface of still, shallow pools of water. It grows close to the edge of the water and spreads out in a large, green sheet.



The South Slavey used duckweed as an indicator plant (a plant that tells something about the environment). They knew they would get an itchy rash if they drank water from a pond that had duckweed. Because duckweed grows in water that is still, with no running source, the water may be unhealthy to drink.

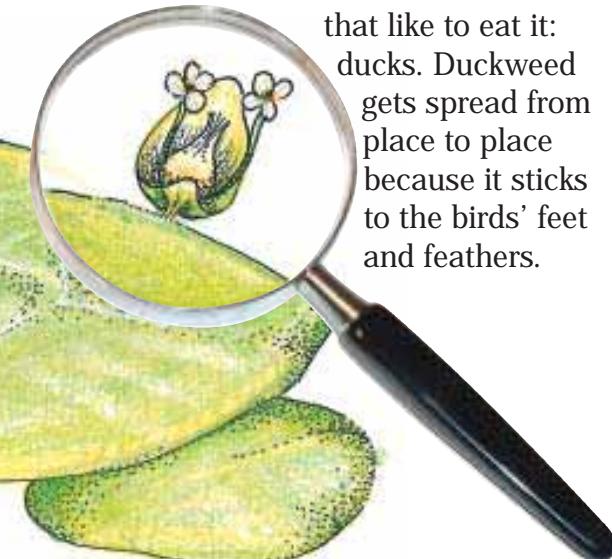
Wacky

Duckweed has no roots, no stems, and flowers that are so small you need a microscope to see them. But, what it does have are small and smooth discs that float on top of the water with one tiny rootlet dangling underneath. The flowers grow in pits at the edge of the discs.

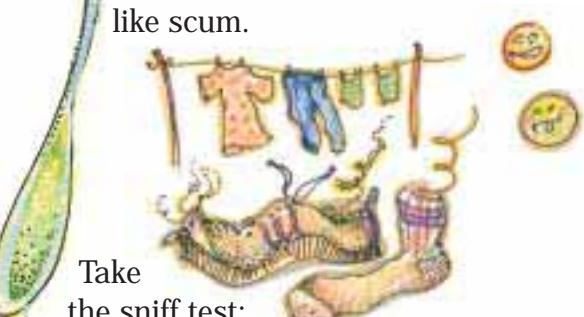


Eight duckweeds
on your fingertip.

Duckweed gets its name from the birds that like to eat it: ducks. Duckweed gets spread from place to place because it sticks to the birds' feet and feathers.



Duckweed looks like pond scum, but, this is the wacky part: it isn't! If you see duckweed growing in your area, bend down and pick it up. You'll be surprised to find that it doesn't smell like scum or feel like scum.

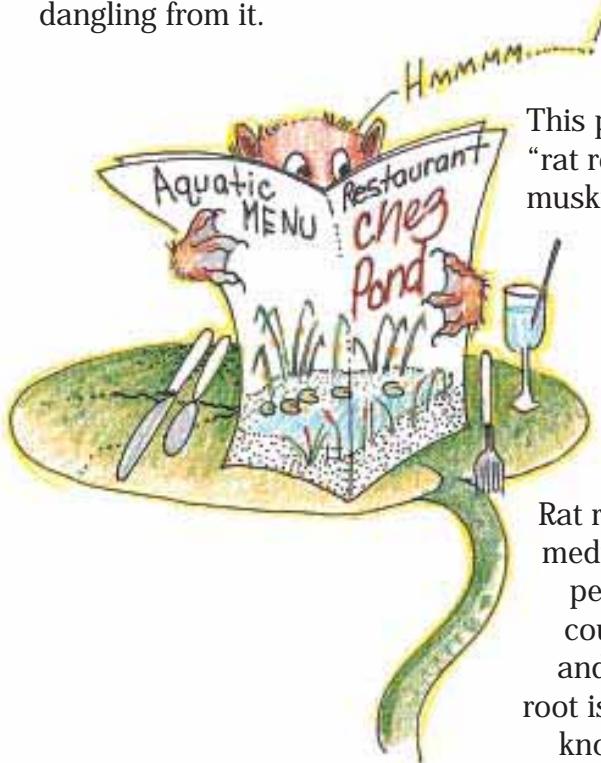


Take
the sniff test:
Does it smell fresh and clean
or like old gym socks?

Rat Root

Acorus americanus

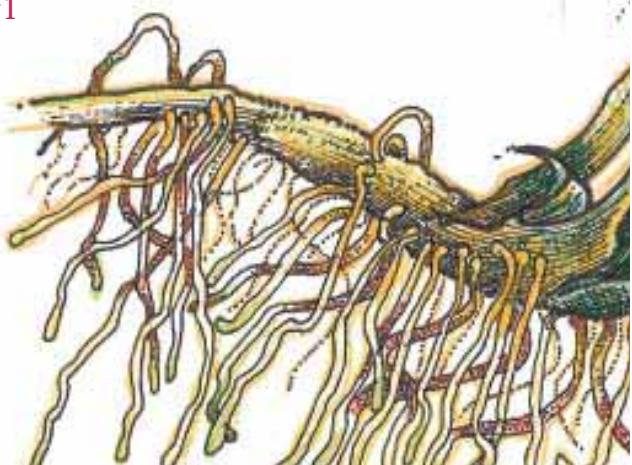
Rat root grows in wet areas or along borders of streams. It has long, sword-like leaves and small, brownish flowers crowded onto a spadix. The root is thick, with many smaller rootlets dangling from it.



This plant is known as "rat root" because muskrats eat it.

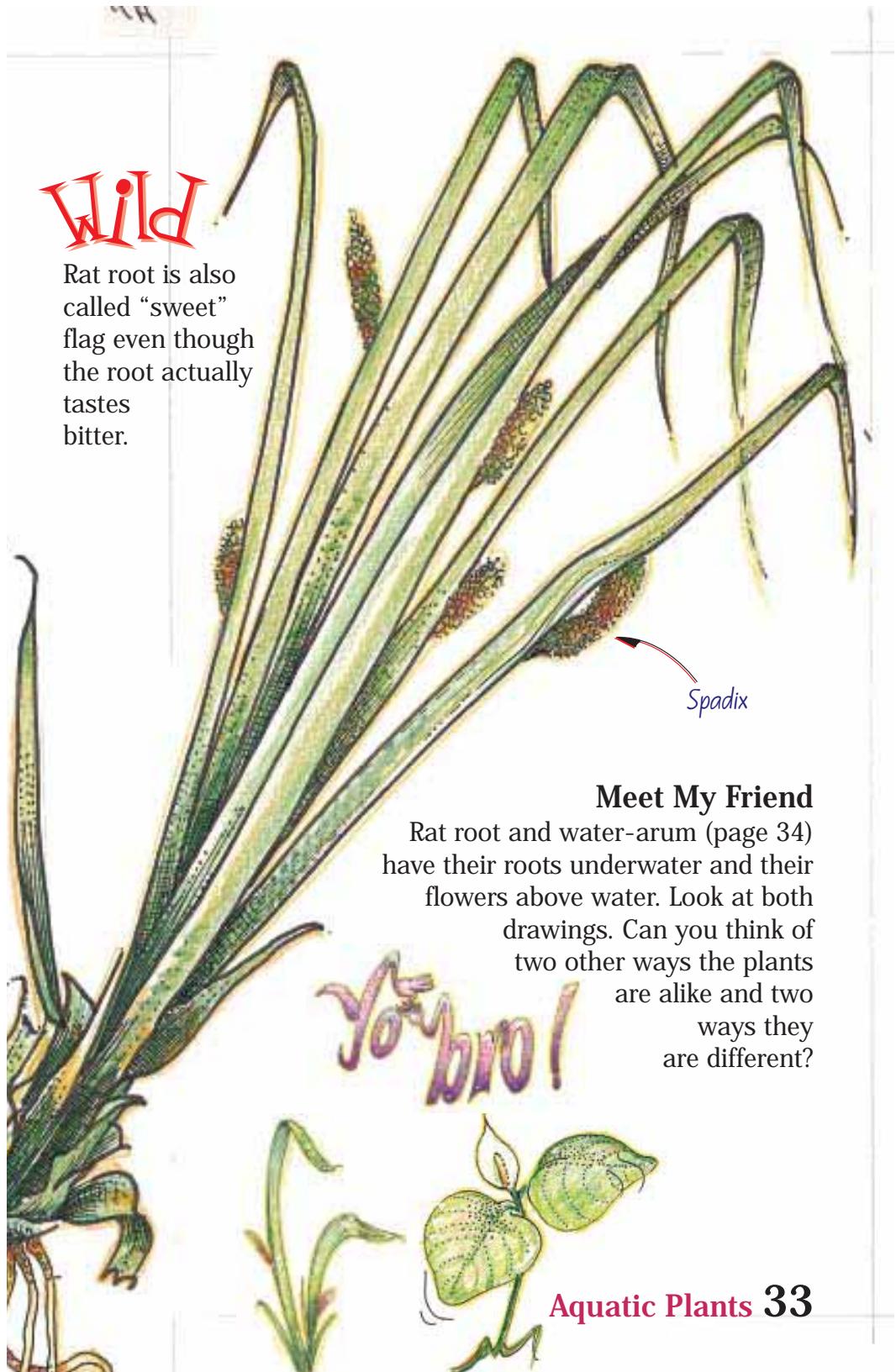
Rat root is considered strong medicine by local Aboriginal peoples. It can be used for coughs, colds, sore throats and stomach problems. Rat root is one of the most widely known and used medicines from nature.

1 Rulus Numeris Uno
Remember Rule #1



Wild

Rat root is also called "sweet" flag even though the root actually tastes bitter.



Meet My Friend

Rat root and water-arum (page 34) have their roots underwater and their flowers above water. Look at both drawings. Can you think of two other ways the plants are alike and two ways they are different?

Yerbiol!

Aquatic Plants 33

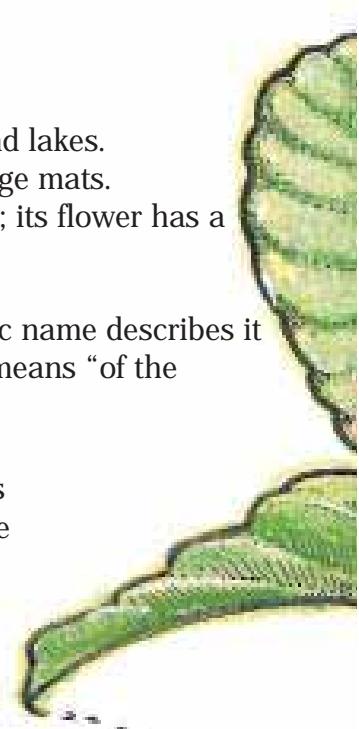
Water-arum

Calla palustris

Water-arum grows at the edges of ponds and lakes. Sometimes it grows out into the water in large mats. Its leaves are bright green and heart shaped; its flower has a spathe and a spadix.

Water-arum is a beautiful plant. Its scientific name describes it well: *Calla* means “beautiful”; and *palustris* means “of the marsh”.

The South Slavey used the fresh or dry roots to soothe a sore mouth. Only the juice of the root was swallowed, not the pulp. Never try this yourself. If not prepared in the right way, this medicine could turn into a poison.

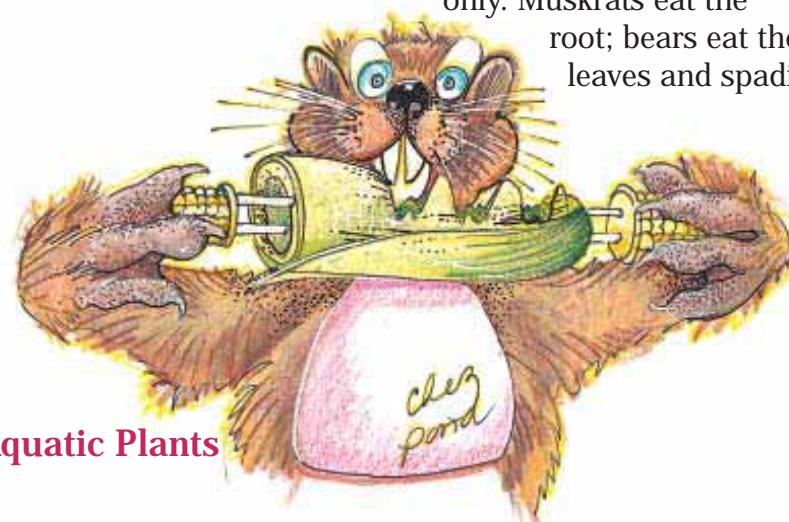


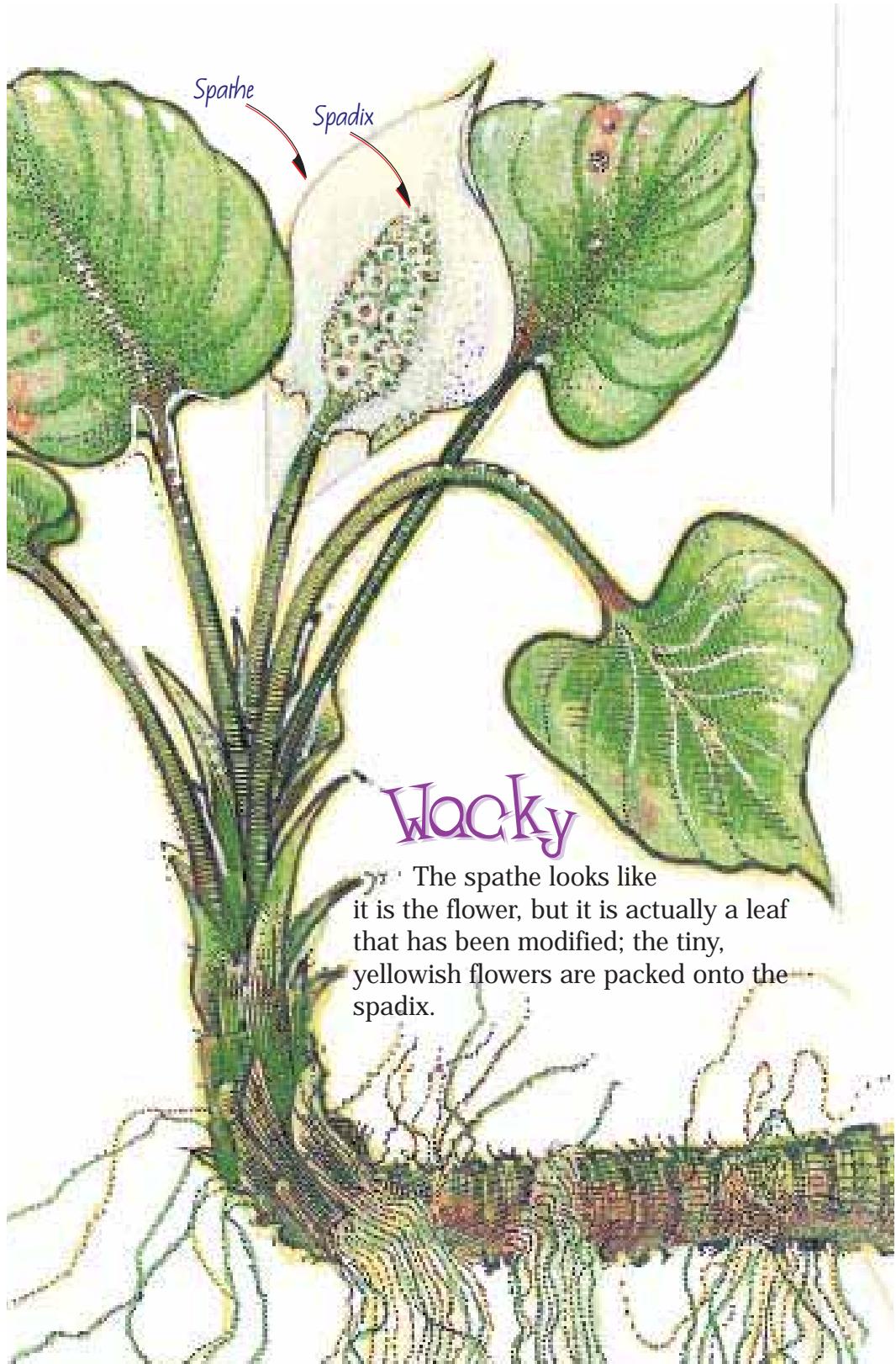
#1

Rulus Numeris Uno
NEVER try to do this
yourself: water-arum
contains a poison that
can cause death.



Water-arum is not food for
people, but for animals
only. Muskrats eat the
root; bears eat the
leaves and spadix

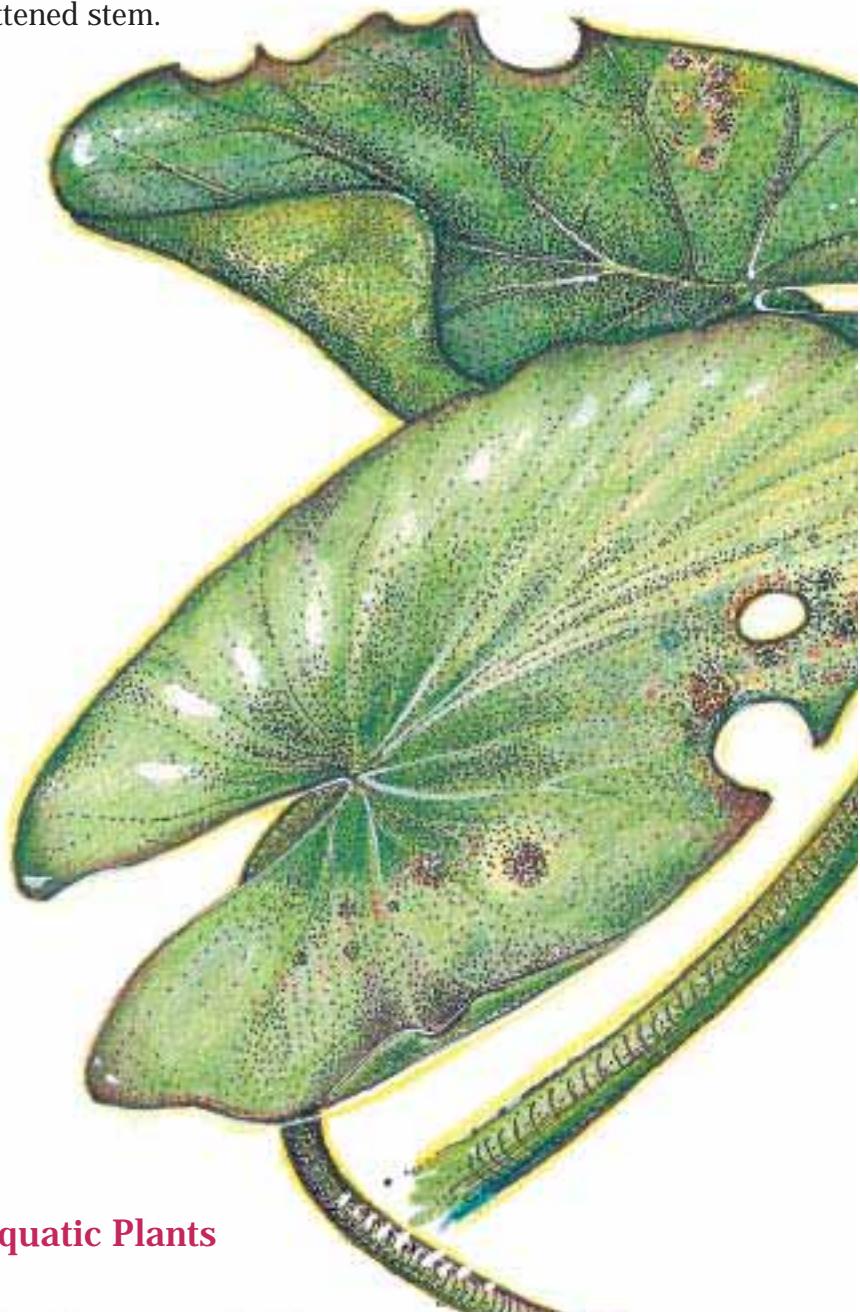


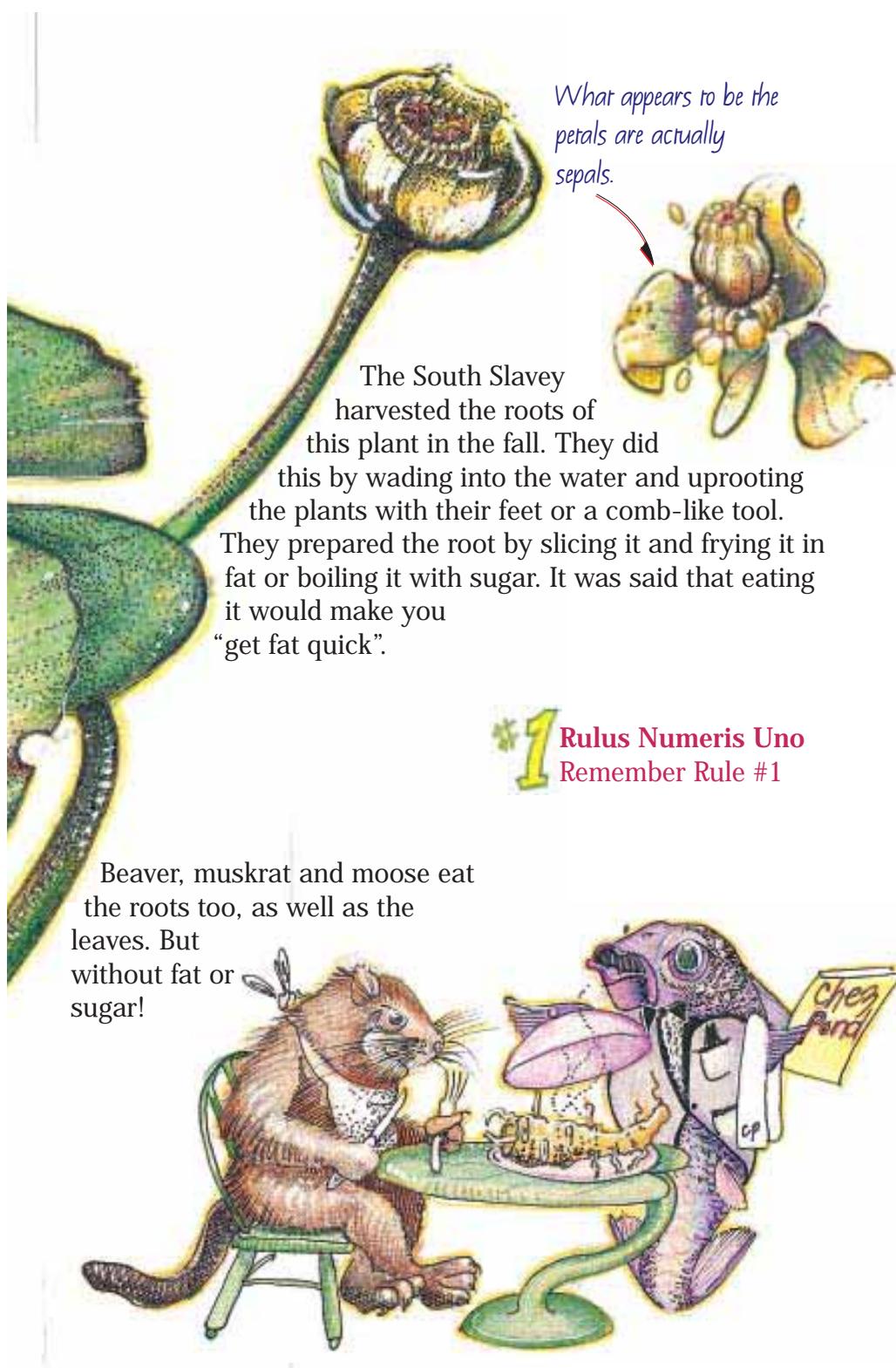


Yellow Pond-lily

Nuphar lutea

Yellow pond-lily can be found floating on the surface of ponds and lakes. Large heart-shaped leaves surround the yellow flower. The underwater root is attached to the flower by a long and flattened stem.





Common Horsetail

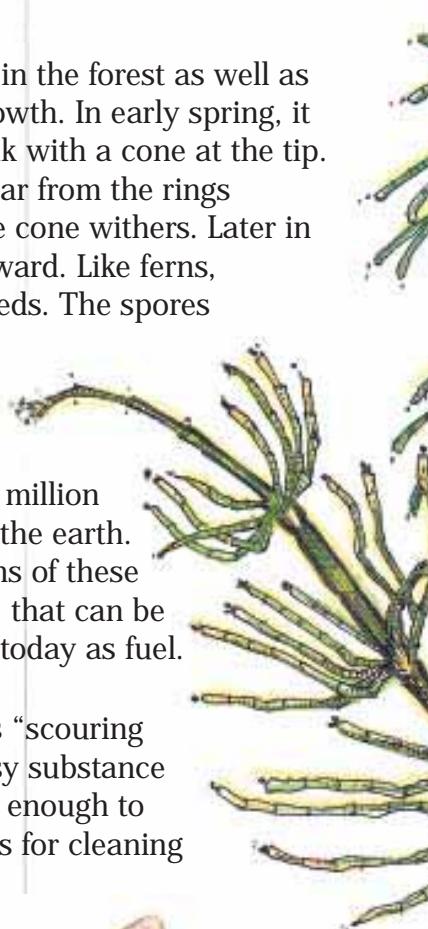
Equisetum arvense

Common horsetail grows in moist soil in the forest as well as farther north. It has three stages of growth. In early spring, it shoots up as a straight, colourless stalk with a cone at the tip. In early summer, green branches appear from the rings around the stalk. At the same time, the cone withers. Later in the season, the branches droop downward. Like ferns, horsetails reproduce by spores, not seeds. The spores are under the cone.

Wild

Horsetails grew as tall as trees 300 million years ago, when dinosaurs roamed the earth.

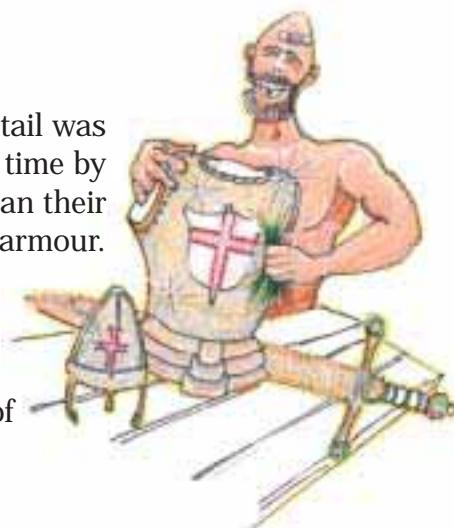
Over millions of years, the remains of these ancient plants turned into coal, that can be burned today as fuel.



Another name for common horsetail is “scouring rush”. The leaves contain a hard, glassy substance called silica, which makes them rough enough to clean pots. The Gwich'in use horsetails for cleaning pots and pans when in the bush.

Wacky

Common horsetail was even used at one time by knights to clean their armour.



Geese are known to eat horsetails, and bears eat them when they come out of hibernation in the spring.

38 Horsetails



Cotton-grass

Eriophorum angustifolium

Cotton-grass is a fluffy-topped plant that grows in wet areas. The fluffy tops nod up and down when the wind blows. When the plants are mature, the fluff breaks away and carries the seeds with it. The seeds are small, three sided and black. If you pull apart the fluff, the seeds are easy to see.

Wild

Over 400 years ago, cotton-grass was used in northern Europe for medicine. But, it turned out that the side effects were worse than the illness!



1 Rulus Numeris Uno

Remember Rule #1

Cotton-grass is used by the people of Nunavut for food. The people eat the lower, pinkish stems raw or preserve them in seal oil. They also use the fluff as wicks for their stone lamps (*qulliq*).

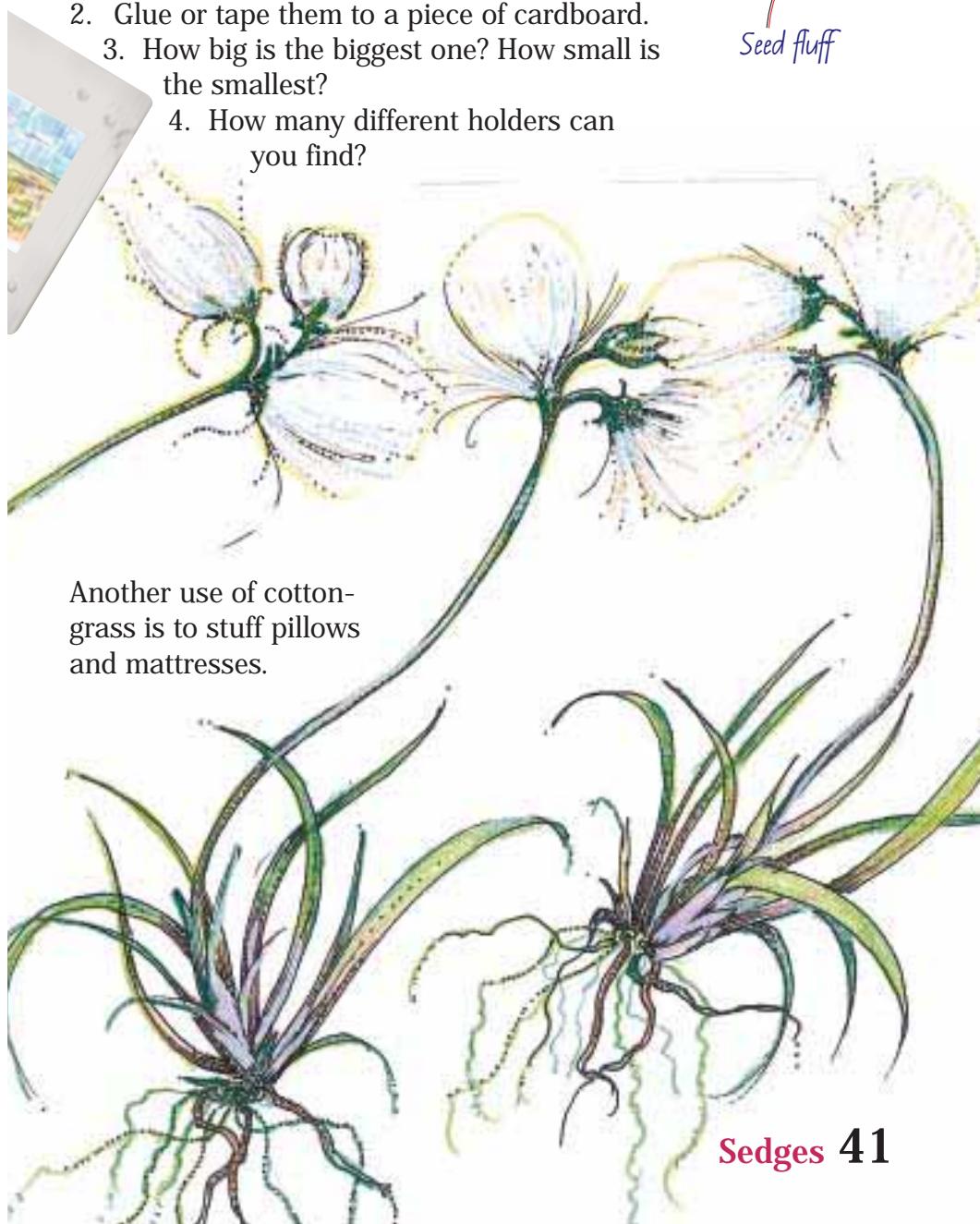
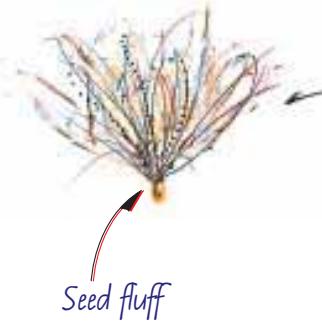


40 Sedges

Seed Holders

Plants have many different ways of holding seeds. The seeds of cotton-grass are held in the fluff. The seeds of pine are held in cones. The seeds of black currant are held in the berries.

1. Collect several different seed holders.
2. Glue or tape them to a piece of cardboard.
3. How big is the biggest one? How small is the smallest?
4. How many different holders can you find?



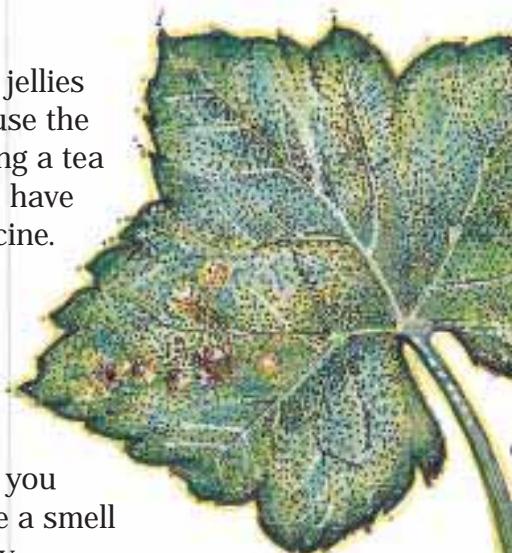
Sedges 41

Black Currant

Ribes hudsonianum

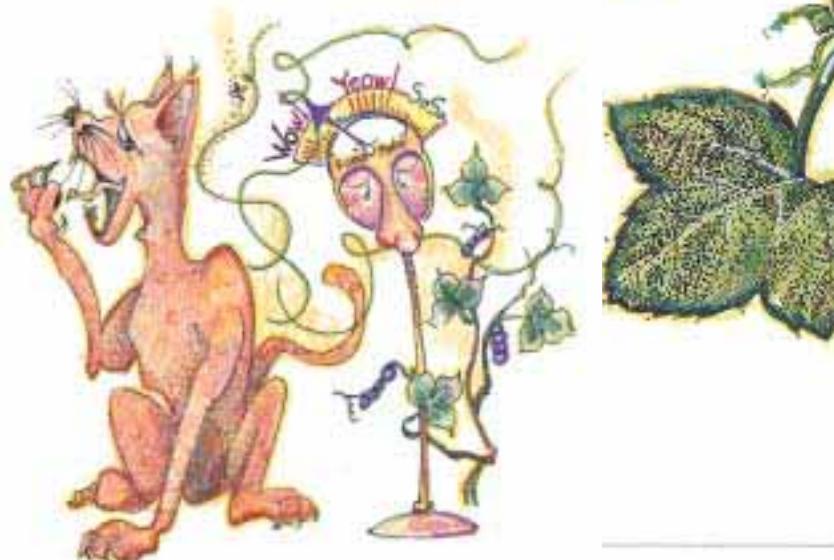
Black currant is a bush that grows in moist woods. It has leaves that look like maple leaves, with three large sections. The leaves are hairy on the surface and the edges are toothed. The flowers are small and white. Delicious black berries replace the flowers in late summer.

Black currants are good in jams, jellies and syrups. Aboriginal peoples use the berries for food, as well as making a tea from the dried leaves. The stems have also been used as a cough medicine.



Wild

Get a whiff of this plant! If you rub the leaves, they release a smell like a tomcat has passed by.

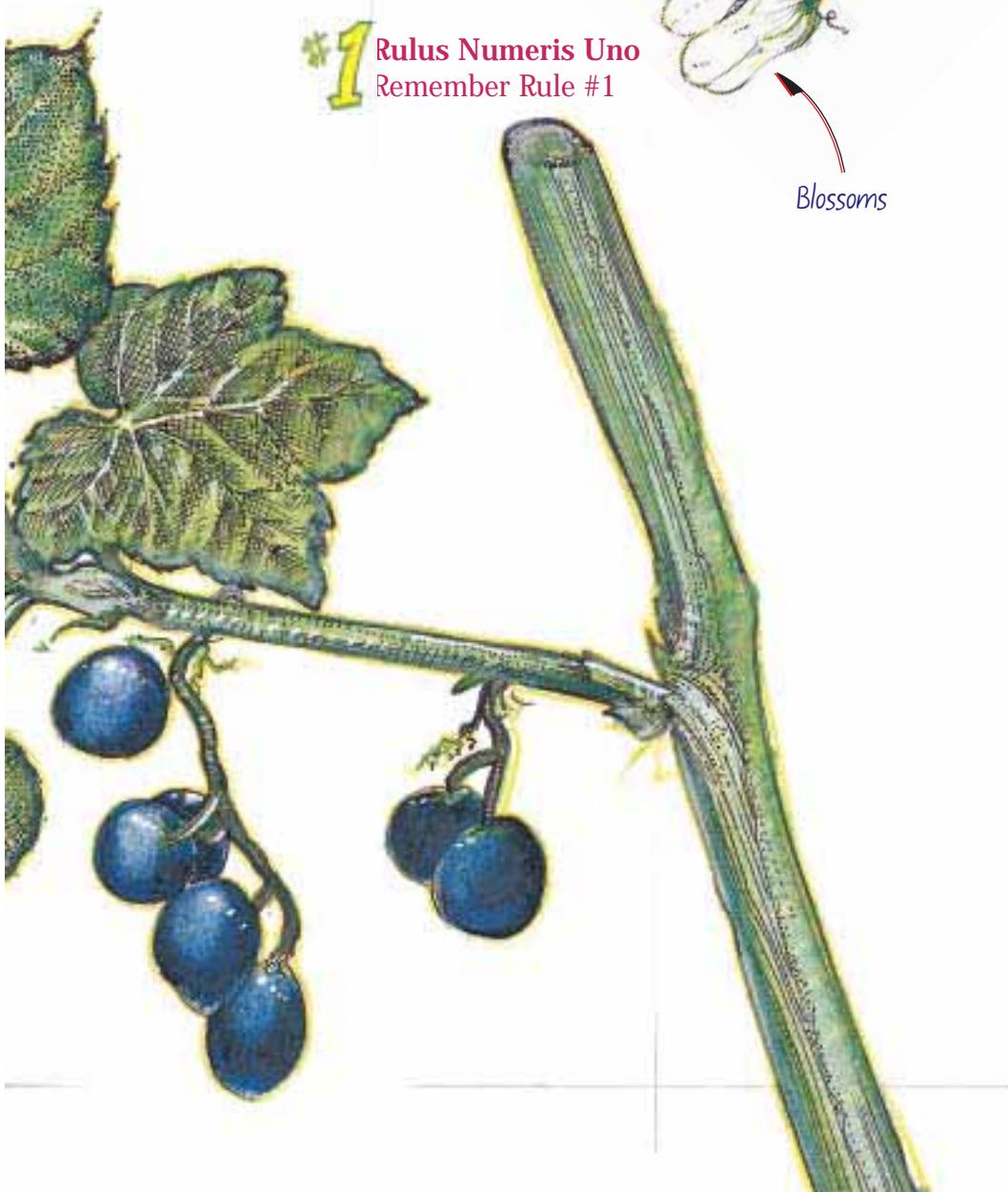


Black Currant Sauce

1. Collect 4 cups black currants.
2. Wash and put in a pot with a little water and sugar.
3. Boil until a thick sauce forms.
4. Serve warm over vanilla ice cream.

YUM!

*1 Rulus Numeris Uno
Remember Rule #1



Bog Rosemary

Andromeda polifolia

Bog rosemary grows in muskeg, damp tundra and turf areas. It is a small, trailing shrub with delicate pink flowers that droop from pink stems.

The South Slavey have mixed bog rosemary with other ingredients to make medicine for people who have a stomach ache, with body aches and a cough. These people knew how to prepare the medicine properly.

#1

Rulus Numeris Uno

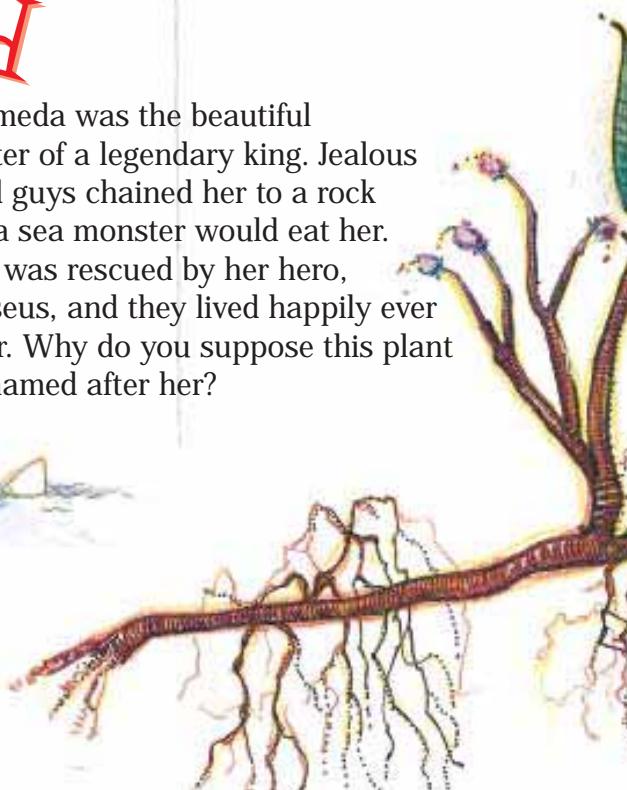
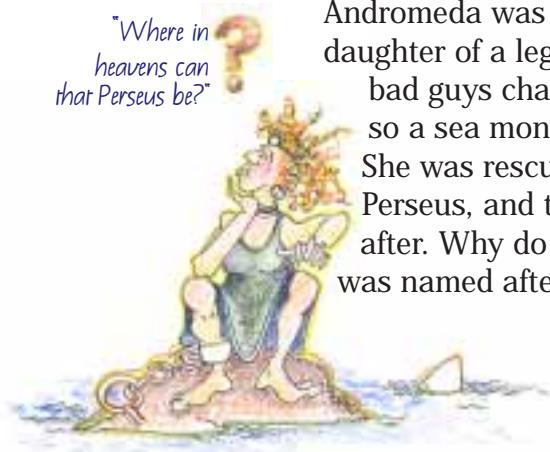
NEVER try to do this yourself:
bog rosemary contains a poison that can cause death.

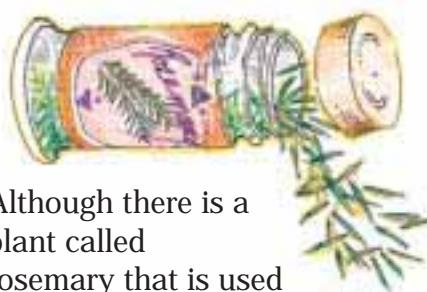


Wild

"Where in
heavens can
that Perseus be?"

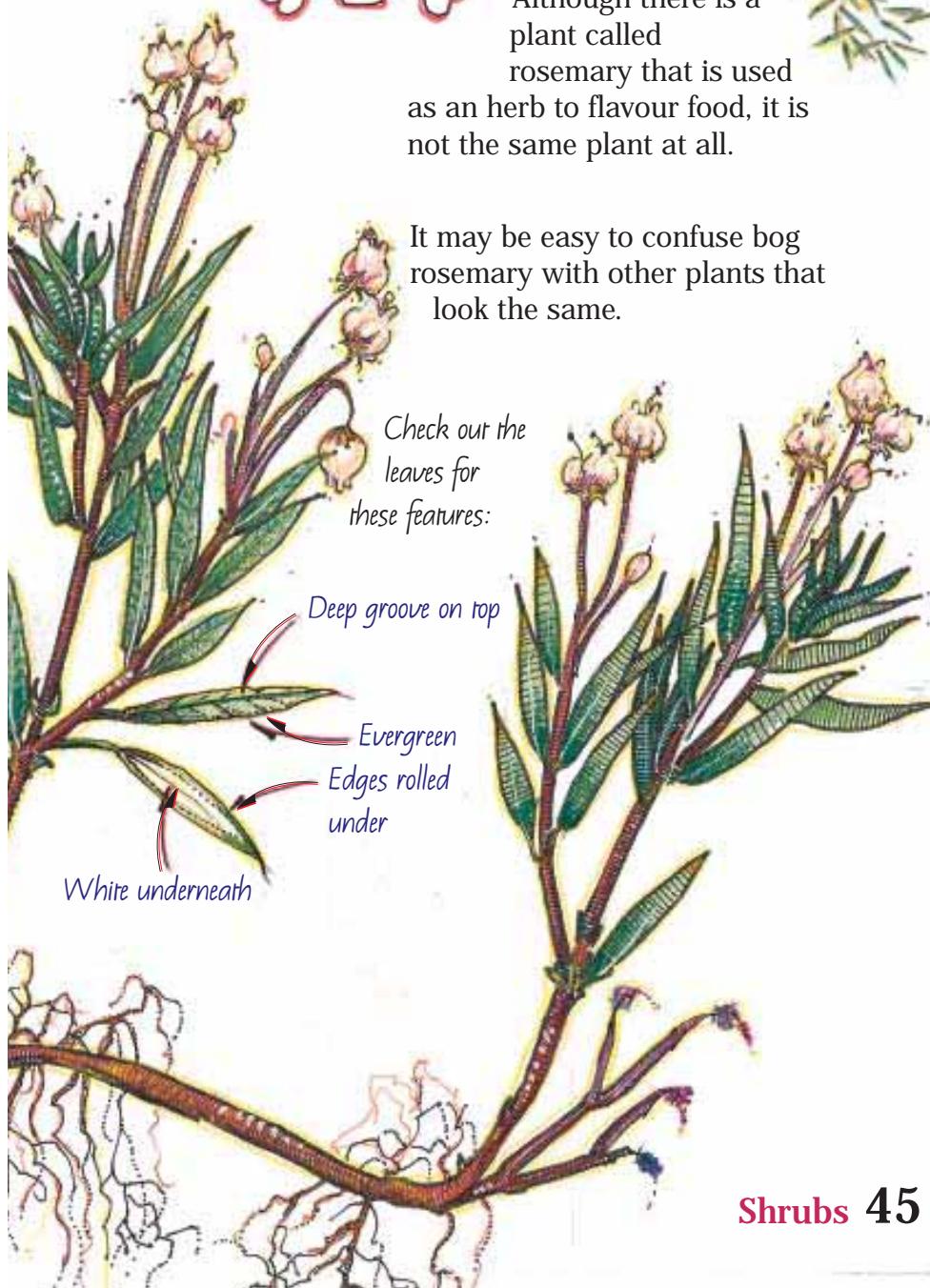
Andromeda was the beautiful daughter of a legendary king. Jealous bad guys chained her to a rock so a sea monster would eat her. She was rescued by her hero, Perseus, and they lived happily ever after. Why do you suppose this plant was named after her?





Although there is a plant called rosemary that is used as an herb to flavour food, it is not the same plant at all.

It may be easy to confuse bog rosemary with other plants that look the same.



Crowberry

Empetrum nigrum

Crowberry grows close to the ground in sandy and rocky areas throughout the NWT. As it branches out, it forms mats, sometimes covering rocks. It is evergreen (leaves stay green all year) and its bristly leaves look like evergreen needles, but they are soft to the touch. The berries are purplish black, shiny and smooth.

Berry Ink

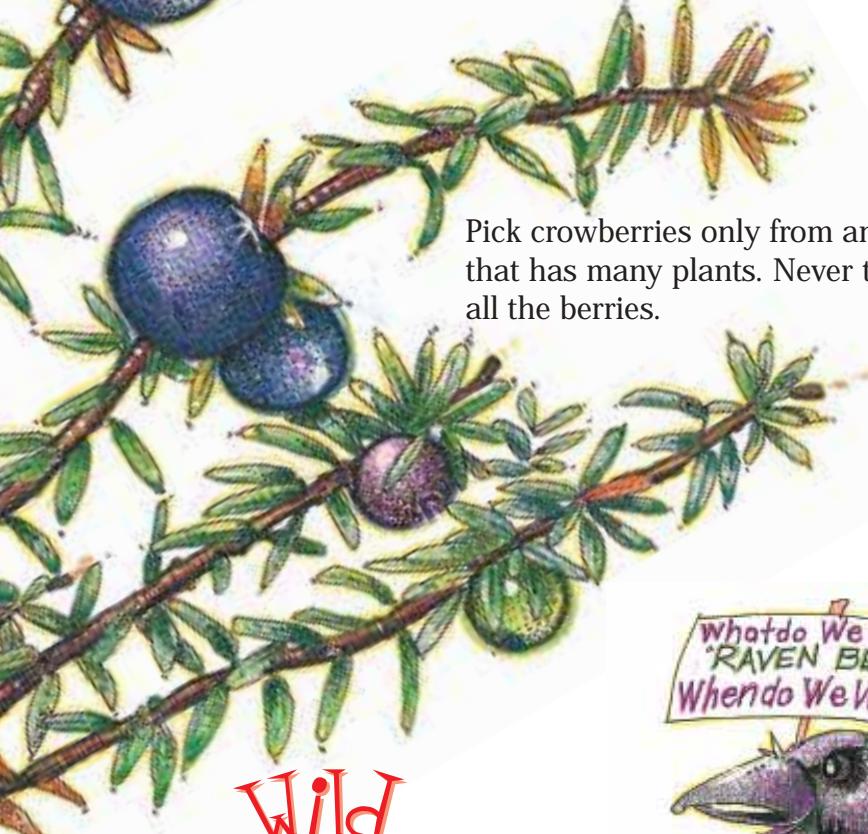
- Gather a cup or so of ripe crowberries.
- Remove stems and leaves.
- Put berries in a jar and press them with the back of a spoon until they are mushy.
- Add a little water and stir. The more water you add, the lighter coloured the ink will be.
- Put a square of paper towel into another jar a little ways to form a sieve.
- Pour berry mixture into paper towel. Only the liquid will drain through. This is your ink.
- Keep the container covered until you are ready to use the ink. You will need a straight pen with a nib or a fountain pen, or a sharpened quill of a feather.



The Dogrib boil crowberry branches and roots to make a tea for mouth infections. If boiled with tamarack, the tea can be drunk to cure bad colds.

1 Rulus Numeris Uno Remember Rule #1

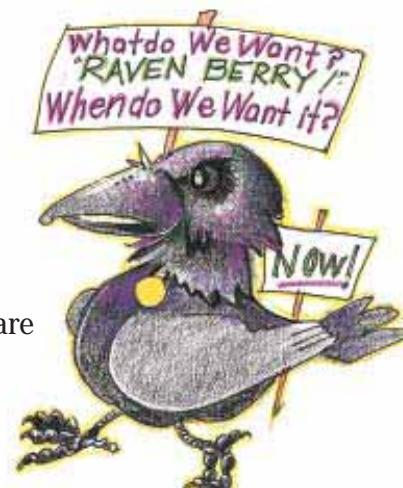
Crowberries are a delicious-tasting berry, and are collected for food during the late summer. Besides people, snow geese also eat the berries!



Pick crowberries only from an area that has many plants. Never take all the berries.

Wild

This plant should be called ravenberry, because there are more ravens than crows in NWT.



Ground Juniper

Juniperus communis

Juniper is a common shrub across the North. Its spreading branches and bright blue berries are seen wherever there are woods and barren places. The needles are short and overlapping.

Juniper berries and young leaves can be used to make a pleasant-tasting tea. The Gwich'in people use juniper tea for colds and coughs.

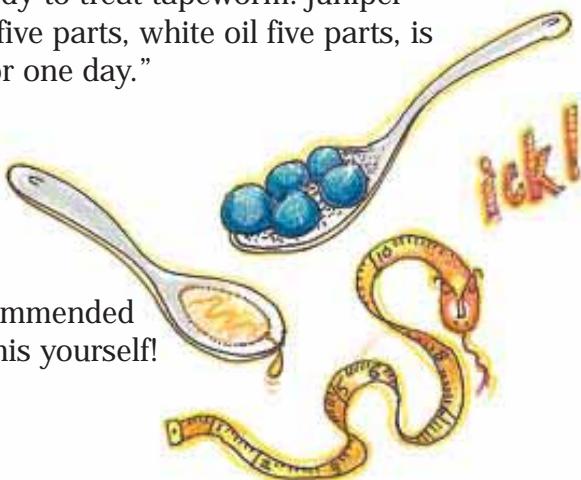


1 Rulus Numeris Uno Remember Rule #1

Here's a really wild way to use the berries, a recipe for tapeworm medicine from a 1500 BC Egyptian papyrus.

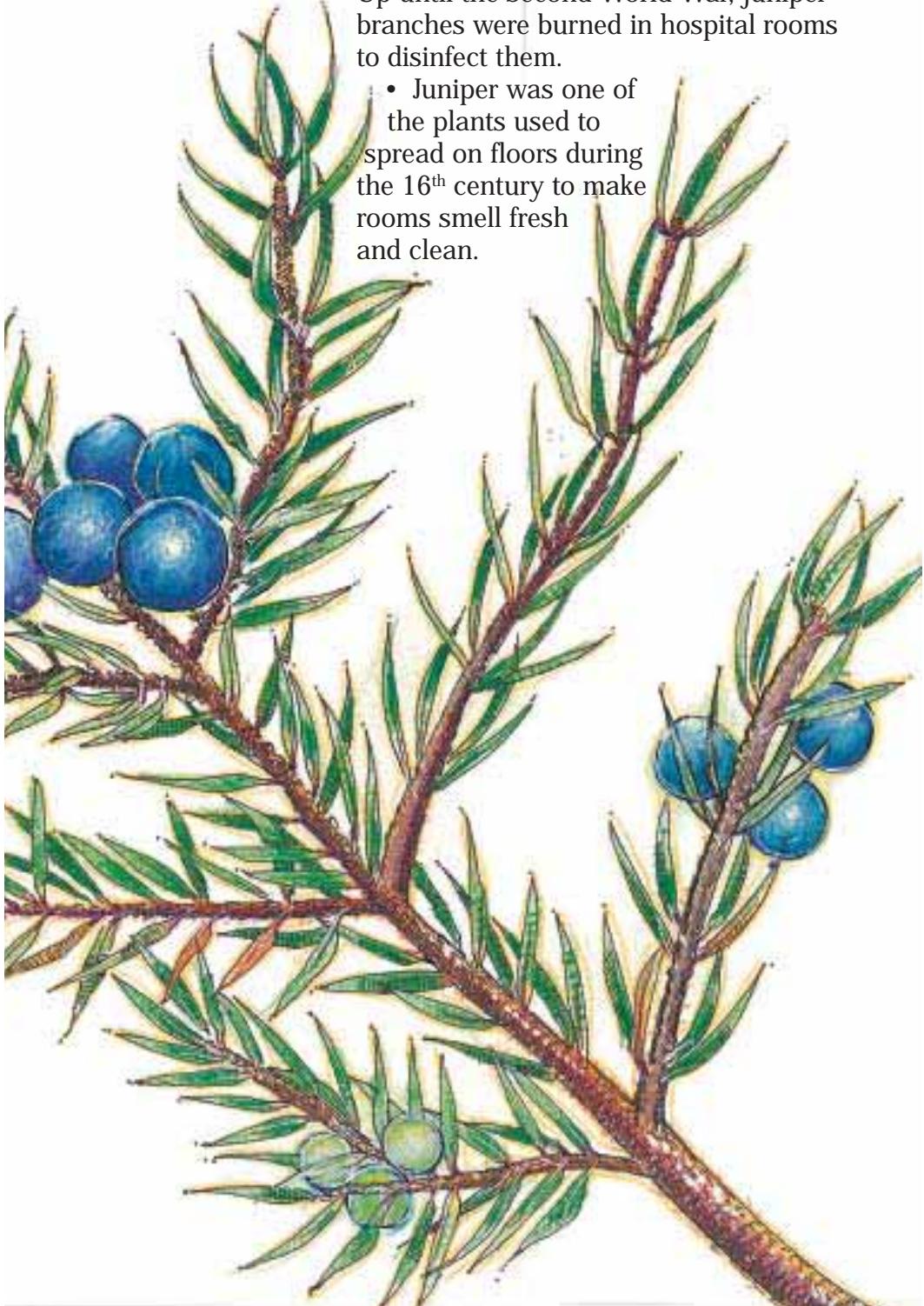
"A remedy to treat tapeworm: juniper berries five parts, white oil five parts, is taken for one day."

It is NOT recommended that you try this yourself!



Other Wild Stuff

- Up until the Second World War, juniper branches were burned in hospital rooms to disinfect them.
 - Juniper was one of the plants used to spread on floors during the 16th century to make rooms smell fresh and clean.

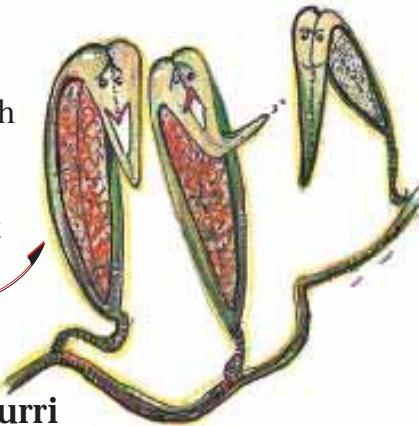


Labrador Tea

Ledum groenlandicum

Labrador tea is a bush that grows in peaty soils. Its leaves are evergreen with woolly undersides. After one year, the wool turns from white to rusty red. Small, white flowers grow in clusters at the top of the plant.

"Obviously the new leaf on the stem."



Make Your Own Northern Potpourri

Potpourri is a blend of plants and spices that give a pleasing smell to a room. You can make your own by gathering parts of northern plants and mixing them together. You do not have to pick the whole plant.

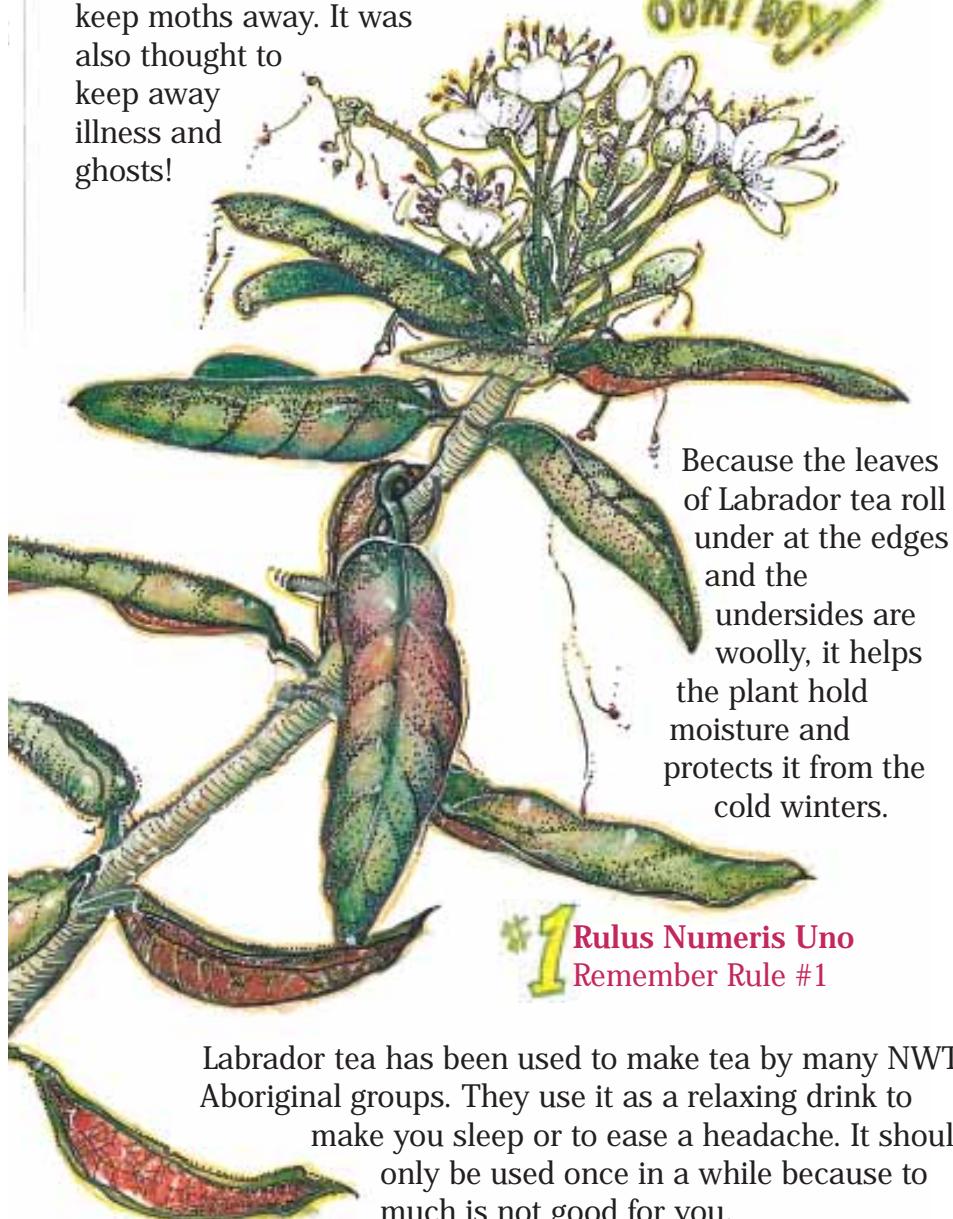
Here are some plants that work well:

- Labrador tea leaves: dry, spicy smell
- Rose petals: sweet, delicate smell
- Pine needles and cones: green, woodsy smell

1. Once you have chosen your plants, let them dry for several days.
2. Add small pieces of bark and other leaves and petals until you have just the mixture you like.
3. Put the blend in a jar in your room so you will have the scent of nature all year long.
4. Try your own combinations of other plants for a different potpourri.

Wacky

Labrador tea is known as moth herb in Europe, because it was hung in closets to keep moths away. It was also thought to keep away illness and ghosts!



Because the leaves of Labrador tea roll under at the edges and the undersides are woolly, it helps the plant hold moisture and protects it from the cold winters.



Rulus Numeris Uno
Remember Rule #1

Labrador tea has been used to make tea by many NWT Aboriginal groups. They use it as a relaxing drink to make you sleep or to ease a headache. It should only be used once in a while because too much is not good for you.

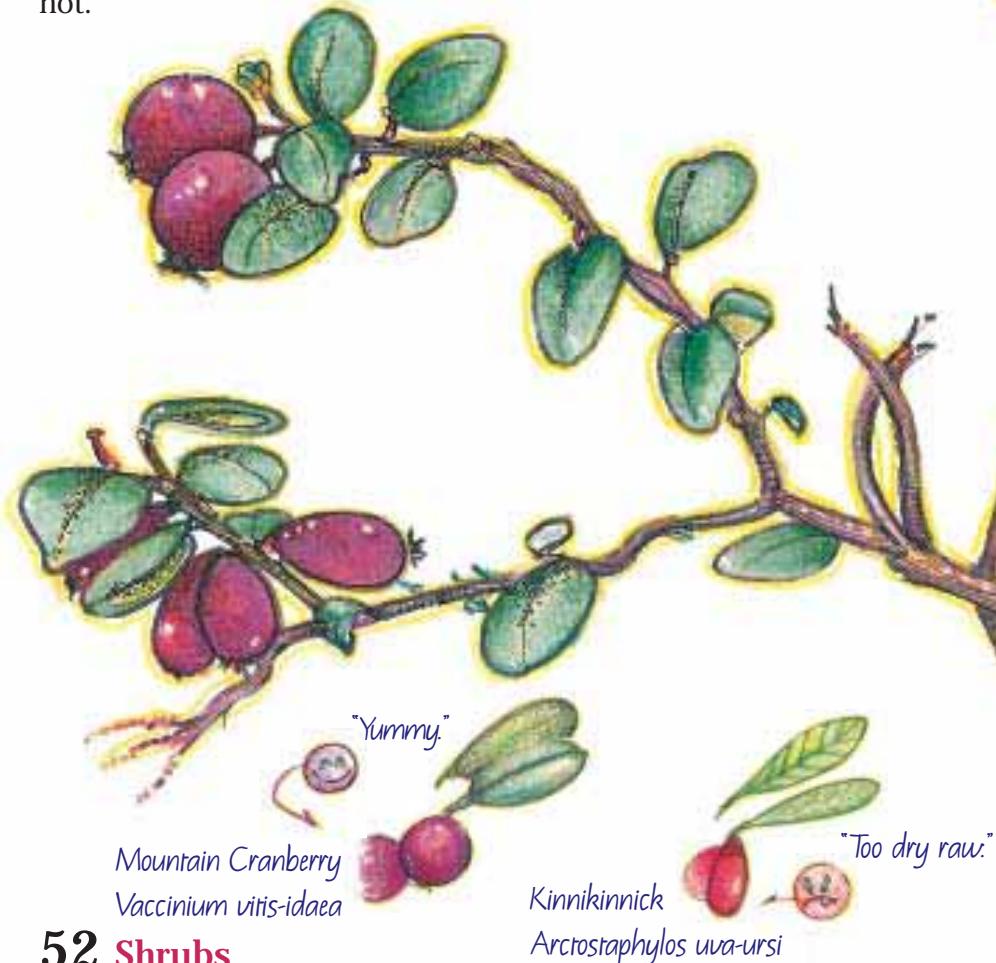
Shrubs 51

Mountain Cranberry

Vaccinium vitis-idaea

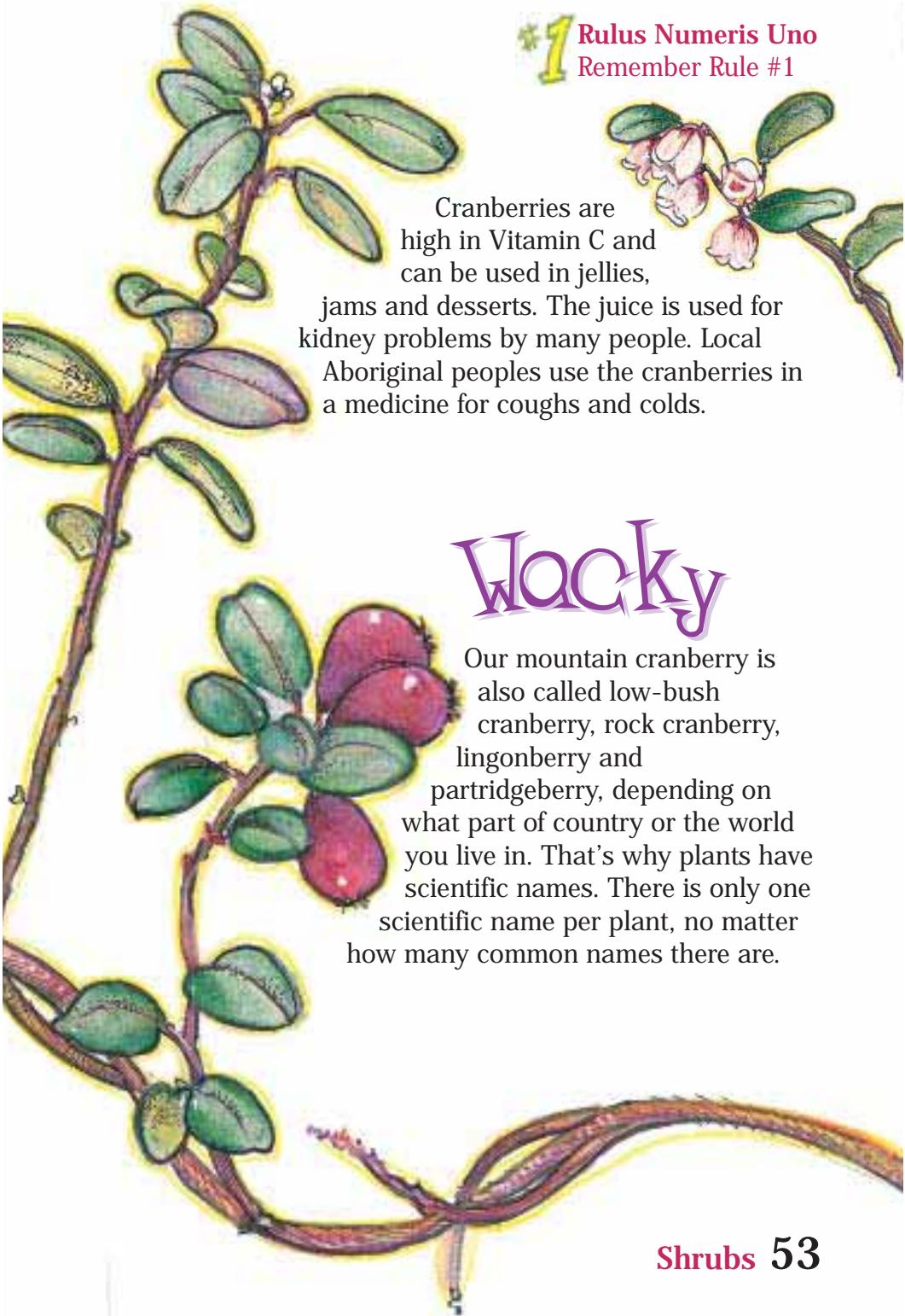
Mountain cranberry grows throughout the North in areas of forest and on the tundra. Its leathery, shiny leaves stay green all year. Its flowers are pink and shaped like bells. The berries are dark red and shiny.

Kinnikinnick (*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*) grows close to the ground like cranberry. To tell the plants apart, look at the underside of the leaves. Cranberry leaves have small, black bristly points, and kinnikinnick does not.



#1

Rulus Numeris Uno
Remember Rule #1



Cranberries are high in Vitamin C and can be used in jellies,

jams and desserts. The juice is used for kidney problems by many people. Local Aboriginal peoples use the cranberries in a medicine for coughs and colds.

Wacky

Our mountain cranberry is also called low-bush cranberry, rock cranberry, lingonberry and partridgeberry, depending on what part of country or the world you live in. That's why plants have scientific names. There is only one scientific name per plant, no matter how many common names there are.

Prickly Wild Rose

Rosa acicularis

Prickly wild rose can be found in open woods, burns and along riverbanks. It is named for its prickly stems. The large, pink flowers have five petals and a sweet smell. The flowers last only a short time, and are replaced by rose hips (berries), which contain many, many seeds.



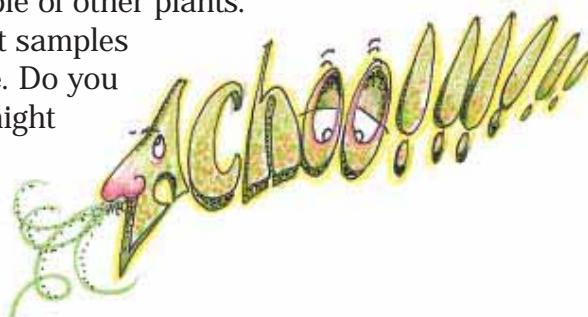
For centuries, roses have been seen as symbols of love and romance. Even today, roses are given as gifts to loved ones on special occasions.



Nothing to Sneeze At

Some people are allergic to pollen of certain plants. Roses are one of the plants that you can easily remove pollen from.

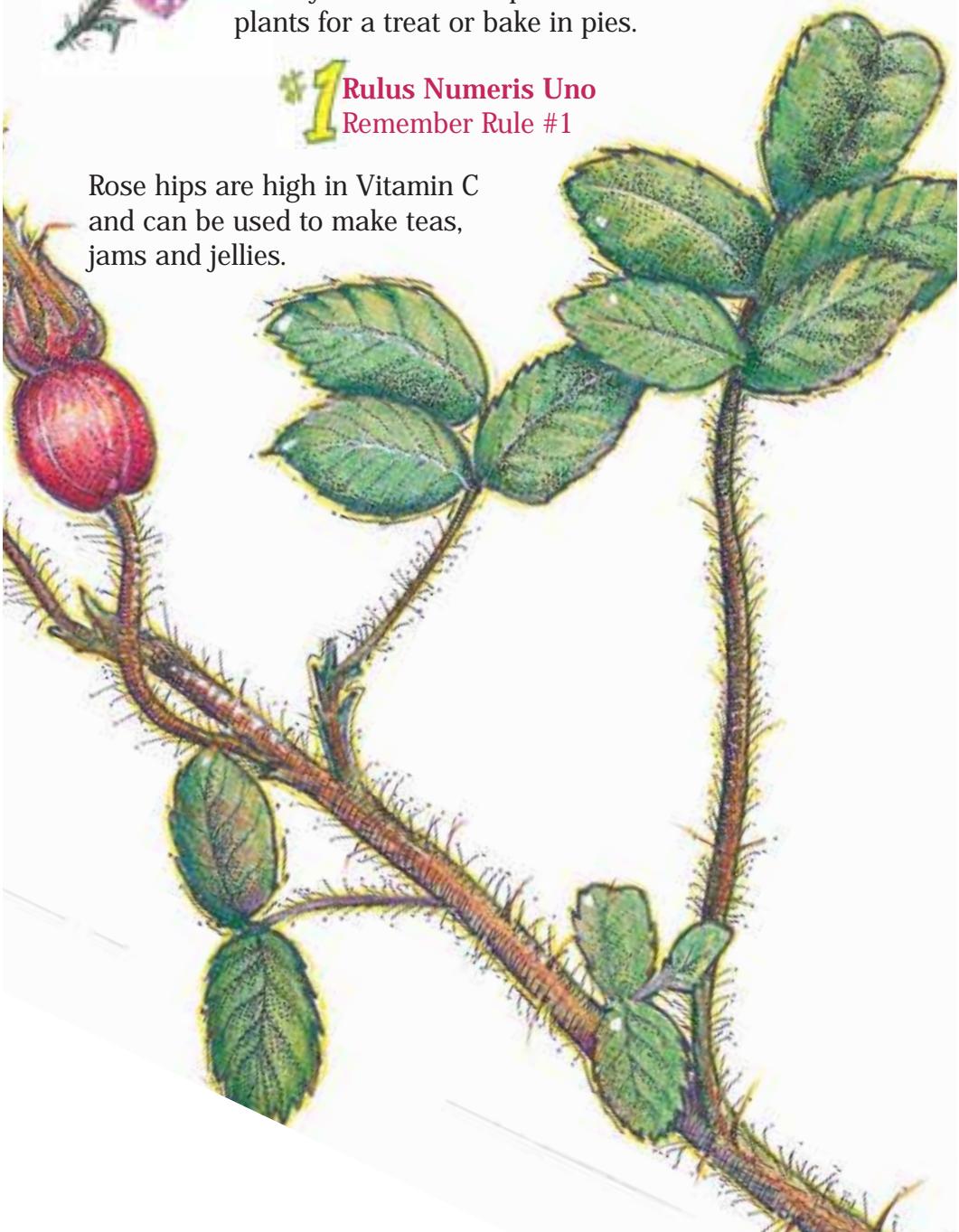
1. Take a piece of transparent tape and touch it to the stamens, holding with both hands.
2. Pull the tape gently away from the plant and fold in half. You now have a sample of rose pollen.
3. Try this with a couple of other plants.
4. Look at the different samples under a microscope. Do you see anything that might make people sneeze?





The petals of prickly wild rose have been used by many local Aboriginal peoples to make eye drops. You can also chew the petals and put them on bee stings to take away the sting. Or, you can eat the petals fresh from the plants for a treat or bake in pies.

Rulus Numeris Uno Remember Rule #1



Rose hips are high in Vitamin C and can be used to make teas, jams and jellies.

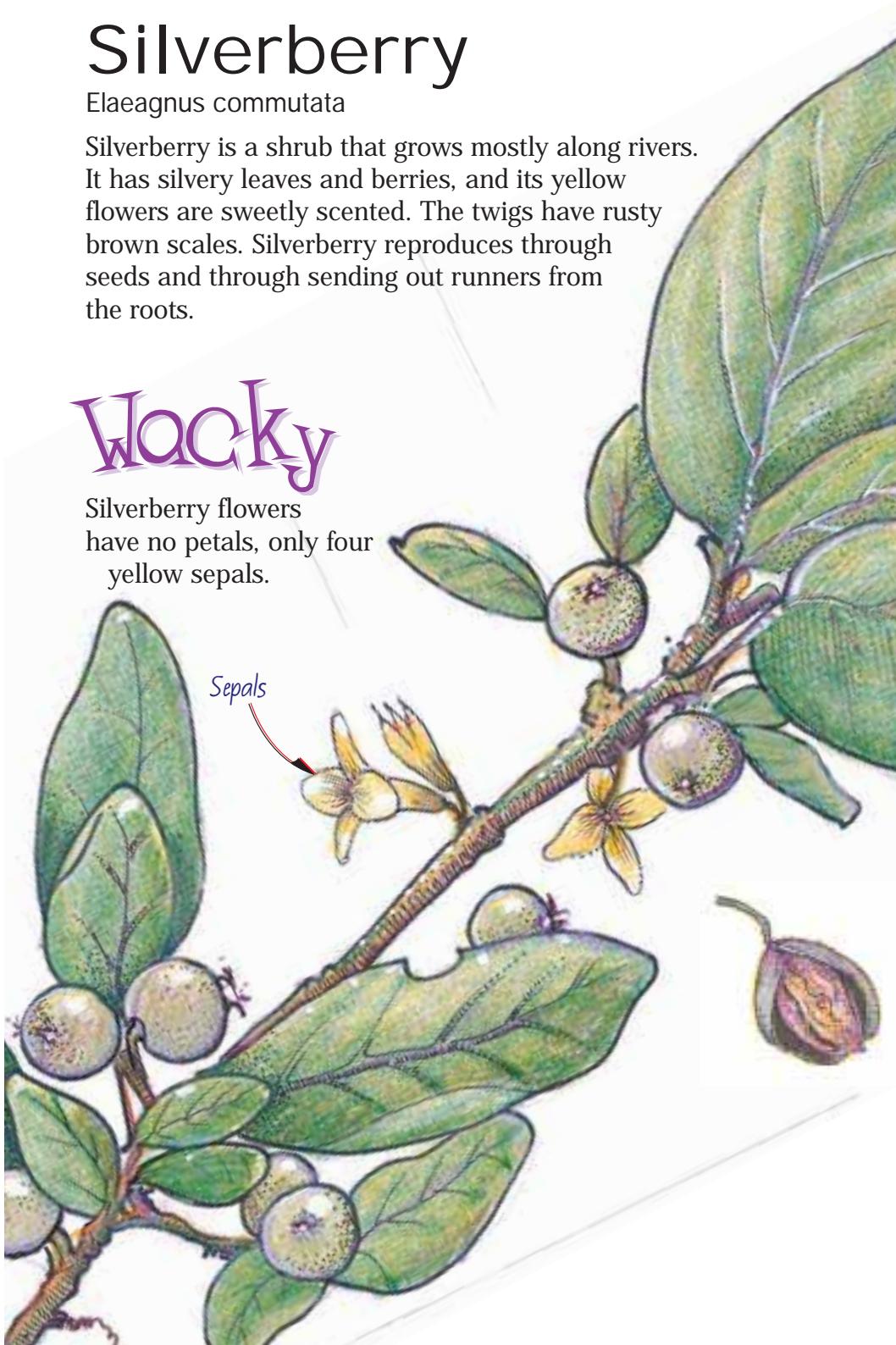
Silverberry

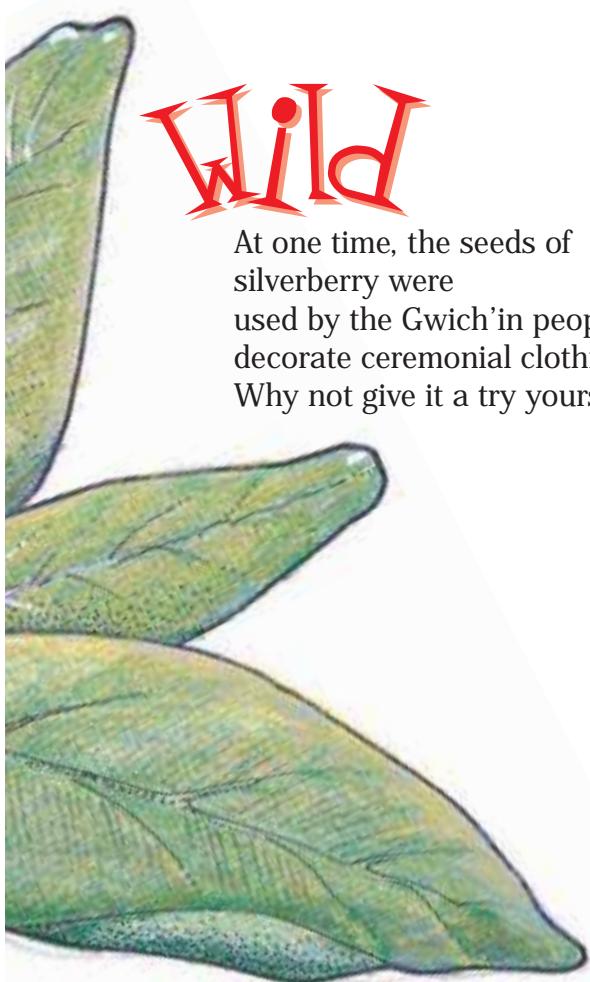
Elaeagnus commutata

Silverberry is a shrub that grows mostly along rivers. It has silvery leaves and berries, and its yellow flowers are sweetly scented. The twigs have rusty brown scales. Silverberry reproduces through seeds and through sending out runners from the roots.

Wacky

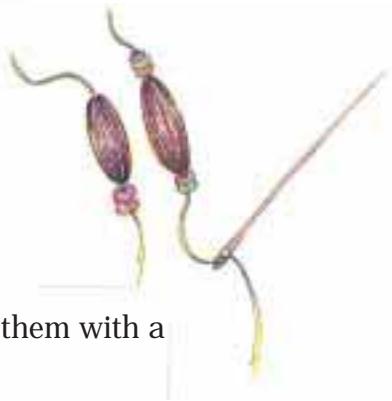
Silverberry flowers have no petals, only four yellow sepals.





Wild

At one time, the seeds of silverberry were used by the Gwich'in people to decorate ceremonial clothing. Why not give it a try yourself?



Seeds into Beads

Do this only with adult supervision.

1. Boil the berries to remove the flesh.
2. While the seeds are still soft, pierce them with a needle and thread.
3. Let the seeds dry on the thread.
4. Oil the seeds to keep them from drying out.
5. Make a necklace or fringe for a jacket.

Pick berries only from an area where they are plentiful. Make sure you leave enough berries on the shrubs to ensure new plants will grow next year.

Soapberry

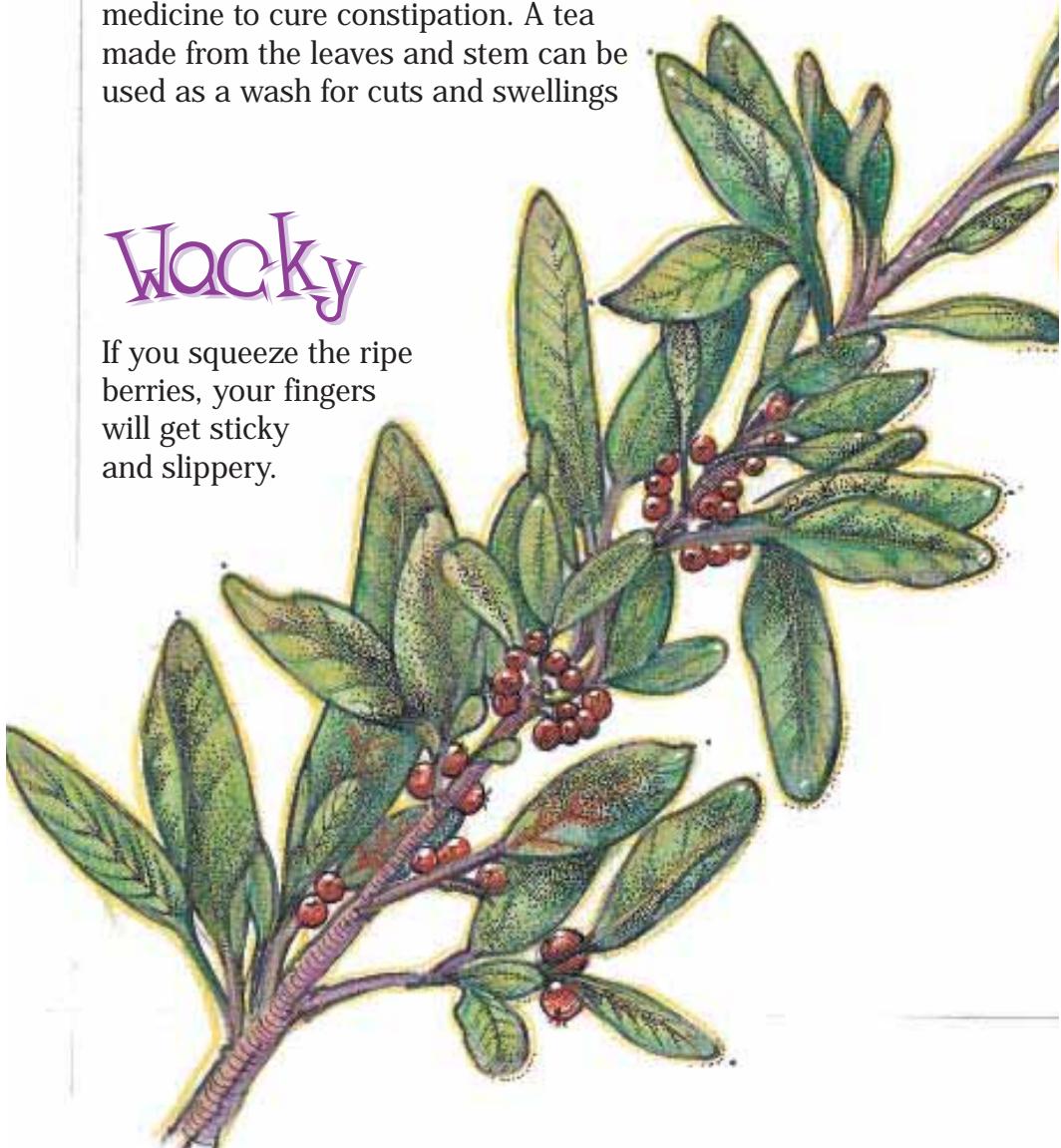
Shepherdia canadensis

Soapberry is a shrub that grows over 1m high in open woods and gravelly or sandy areas. The leaves are long and oval with silvery hairs on the underside. Twigs and leaves are covered with scales and are rough to the touch. In August, the shrub has many bright red, juicy berries.

The Sahtu Dene use soapberry as a medicine to cure constipation. A tea made from the leaves and stem can be used as a wash for cuts and swellings

Wacky

If you squeeze the ripe berries, your fingers will get sticky and slippery.



1

Rulus Numeris Uno
NEVER eat any
berries unless you
know for sure they
are edible.

With a name like “soapberry”,
it’s hard to imagine the berries
being tasty. Try this traditional recipe for
ice-cream and see for yourself.

Soapberry Ice Cream

1. Gather 4 cups fresh soapberries.
2. Put the cleaned berries in a clean pot or metal bowl.
3. Add 1 cup cold water.
4. Whip using an egg beater or a willow whisk.
5. When mixture becomes foamy, gradually add 1 cup sugar and continue beating the froth until stiff.
6. Serve right away.

If you are not sure how to
identify soapberry
shrubs, take along
someone who can.

Willow

Salix spp.

Willow grows just about everywhere in the NWT: riverbanks, open forest, moist meadows, river flats and stony tundra. There are over 40 different kinds of willow here. A few are as large as trees, but most are low shrubs with branches that stand up or are low along the ground. Willow leaves are long and pointed.

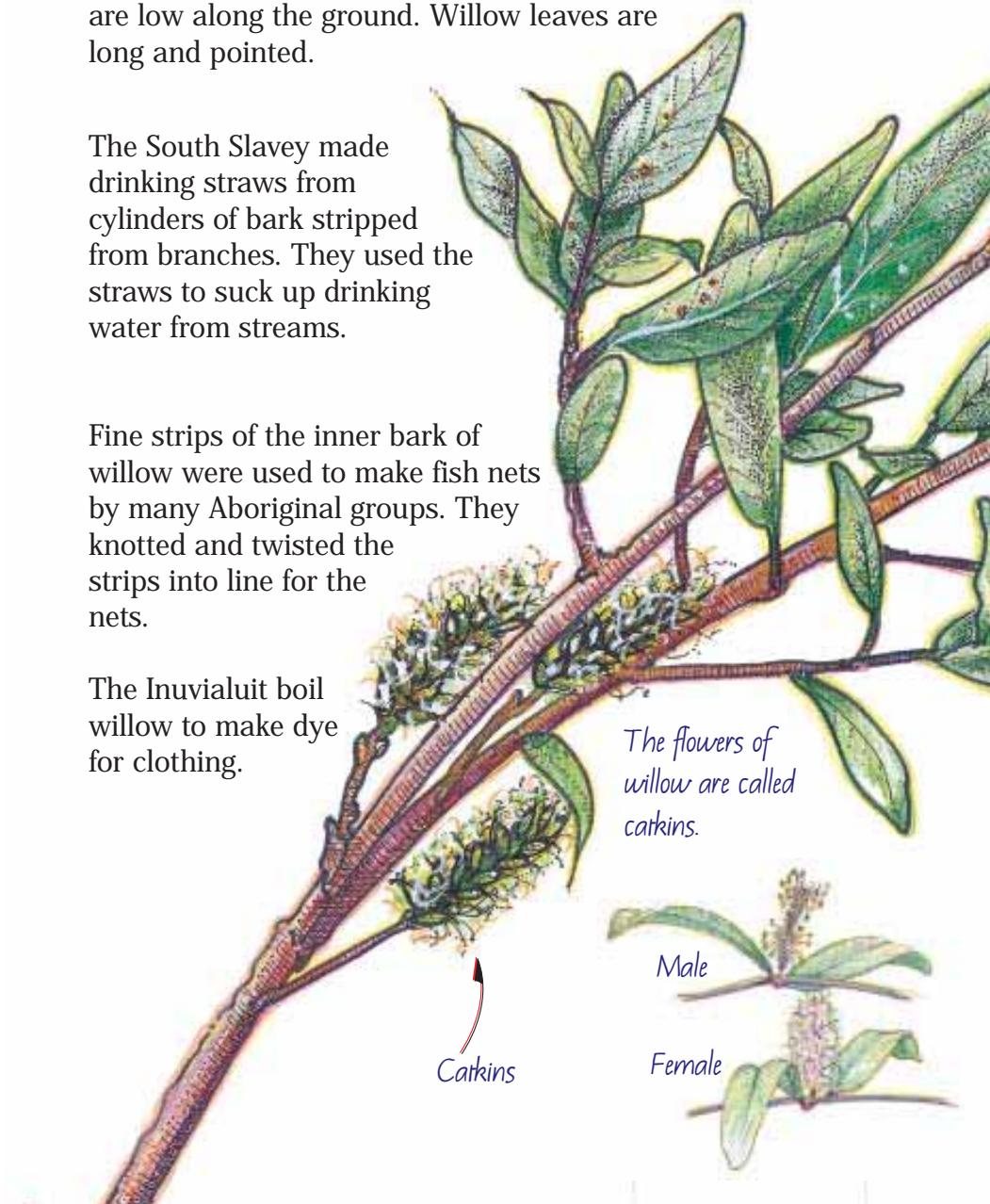
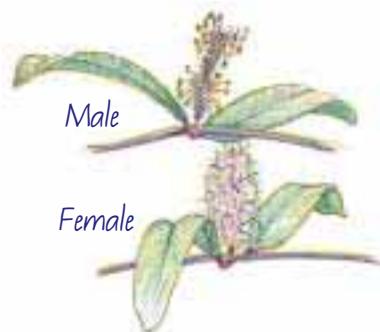
The South Slavey made drinking straws from cylinders of bark stripped from branches. They used the straws to suck up drinking water from streams.

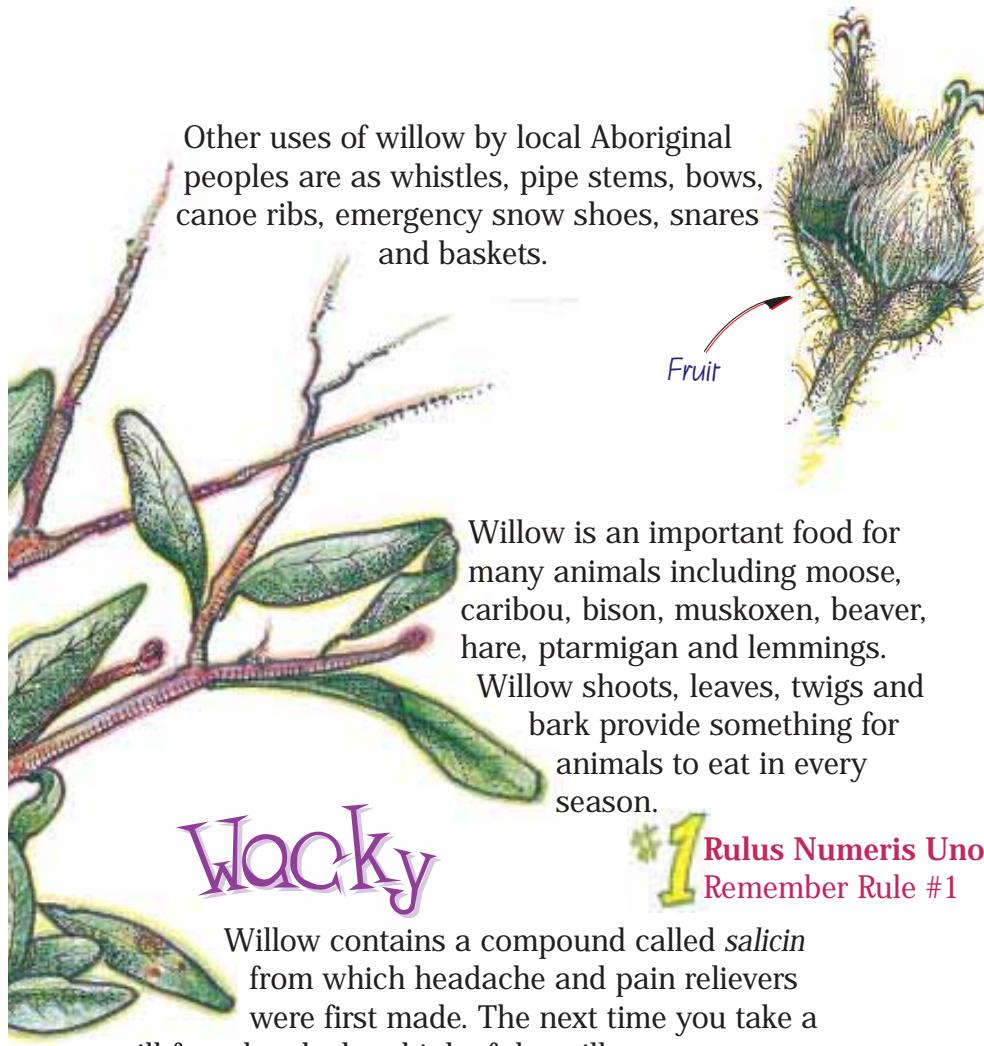
Fine strips of the inner bark of willow were used to make fish nets by many Aboriginal groups. They knotted and twisted the strips into line for the nets.

The Inuvialuit boil willow to make dye for clothing.

The flowers of willow are called catkins.

←
Catkins





Other uses of willow by local Aboriginal peoples are as whistles, pipe stems, bows, canoe ribs, emergency snow shoes, snares and baskets.

Willow is an important food for many animals including moose, caribou, bison, muskoxen, beaver, hare, ptarmigan and lemmings.

Willow shoots, leaves, twigs and bark provide something for animals to eat in every season.

Wacky

Willow contains a compound called *salicin* from which headache and pain relievers were first made. The next time you take a pill for a headache, think of the willow.

Tea made from willow bark has been used as a pain reliever since the time of the Ancient Greeks.

*1 Rulus Numeris Uno
Remember Rule #1



Shrubs 61

Black Spruce

Picea mariana

Black spruce is one of the most common trees of the NWT, growing in wetlands and rocky soils. Its branches bunch up at the top of the tree, but the branches lower down the trunk tend to droop.

The short, four-sided needles stick out on all sides of the branches, with many pointing upward.

The bark of the trunk is rough and scaly. Black spruce has male and female cones. The female cones are purplish in colour, turning to dark brown. The male cones are dark red and grow lower down. They produce pollen.



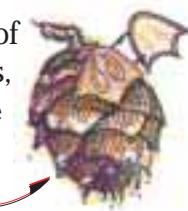
 **Rulus Numeris Uno**
Remember Rule #1

Spruce is used as medicine by many Aboriginal peoples of the North. The cones, boughs, inner bark and gum are all used in medicine. It can be used for colds, headaches, toothaches, skin rashes and sore eyes, depending on which part of the tree you use. The boughs are often used as flooring and bedding for camps out on the land.



White spruce cone

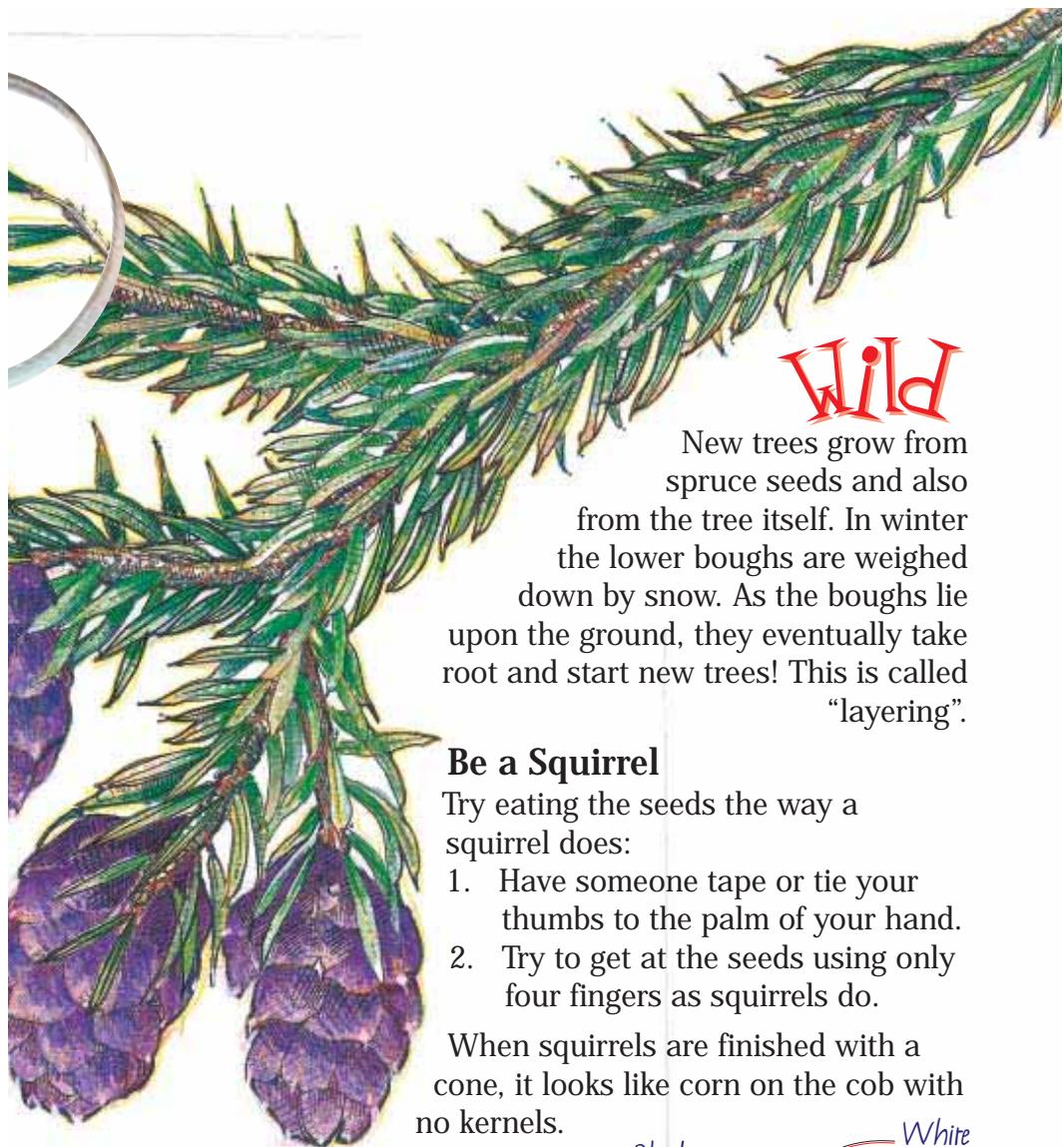
Some people think that the scales of spruce cones are actually the seeds, but they aren't. Tiny seeds lie inside the scales of the female cone.



Black spruce cone

The seeds have wings and are carried easily by the wind. Birds and mammals eat the seeds.





Wild

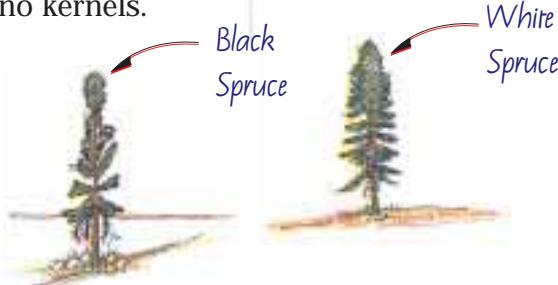
New trees grow from spruce seeds and also from the tree itself. In winter the lower boughs are weighed down by snow. As the boughs lie upon the ground, they eventually take root and start new trees! This is called "layering".

Be a Squirrel

Try eating the seeds the way a squirrel does:

1. Have someone tape or tie your thumbs to the palm of your hand.
2. Try to get at the seeds using only four fingers as squirrels do.

When squirrels are finished with a cone, it looks like corn on the cob with no kernels.



White spruce (*Picea glauca*) is closely related to black spruce. It has a Christmas tree shape, longer cone and usually grows on higher, drier ground.

Jack Pine

Pinus banksiana

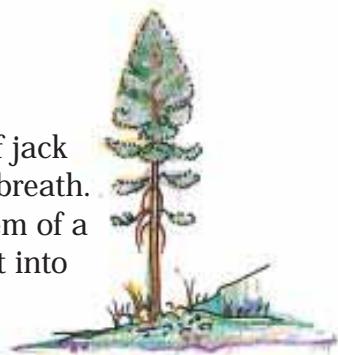
Jack pine grows in thin soils and sandy, rocky areas. The trees that grow in the open may be twisted, but trees that grow together are tall and straight. Pine needles are yellow-green and sharp at the tip. They grow in pairs from the branches. In the spring, the tips of the branches have small male cones, which are filled with pollen. The much larger female cones grow farther down the branches.



Rulus Numeris Uno

Remember Rule #1

The Dogrib people boil the peel of jack pine and drink it for shortness of breath. They also make a tea from the stem of a small pine tree, add sugar and put into sore eyes.



Jack pine seeds are released when the female cones burst open. Some cones open only when the temperature is 50 degrees Celsius, as in a fire. Other cones may open and release their seed after a hot day on the branch. You can see both types of cones on the same tree.

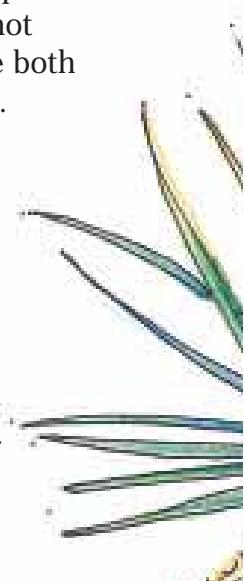
Pop Cone

Watch jack pine cones “burst” when heated.

Do this only with adult supervision.

1. Collect some female cones.
2. Put them in a frying pan.
3. Put the pan over medium heat until the cones open and release the seeds.

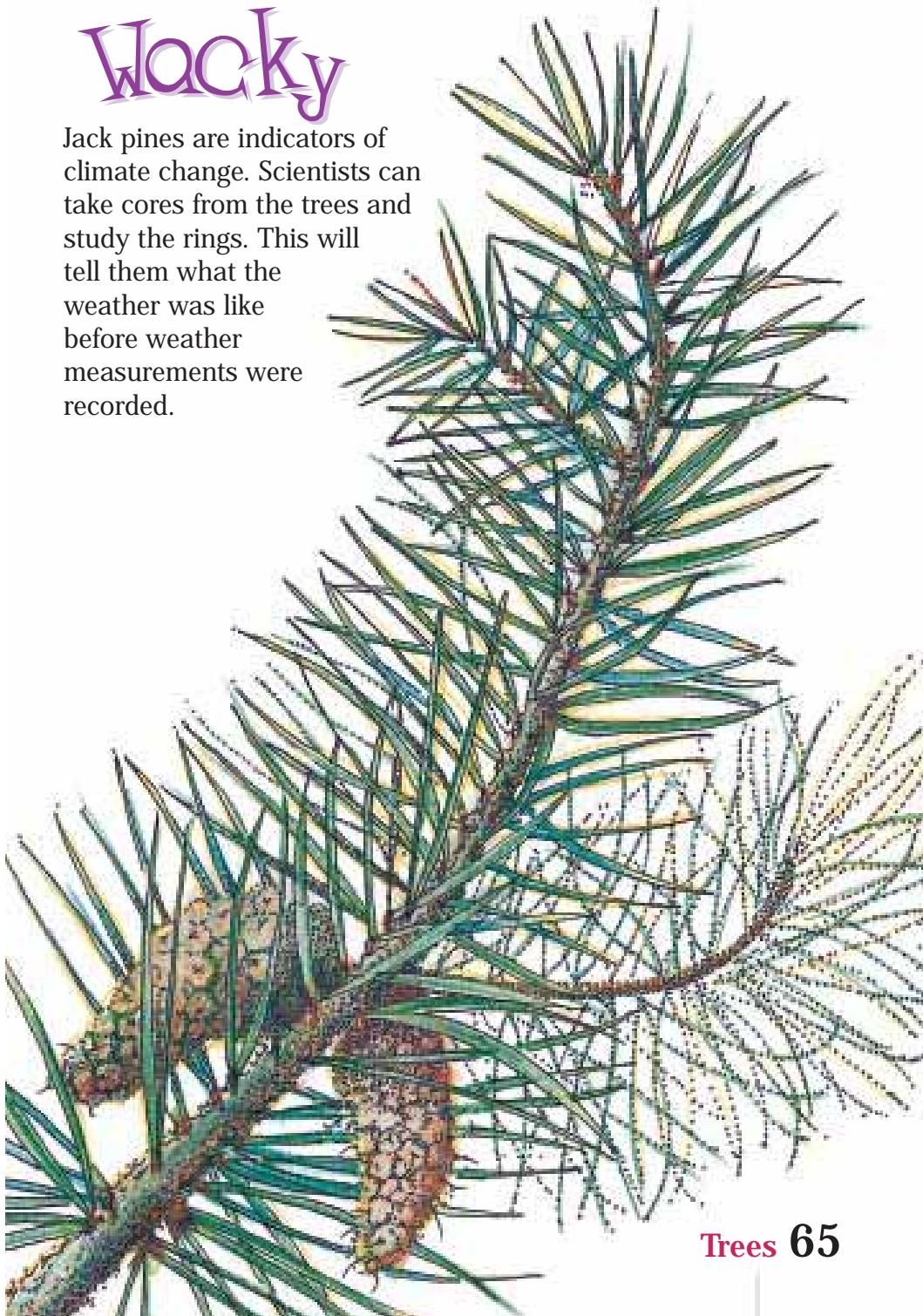
This is what happens to cones during a forest fire.



64 Trees

Wacky

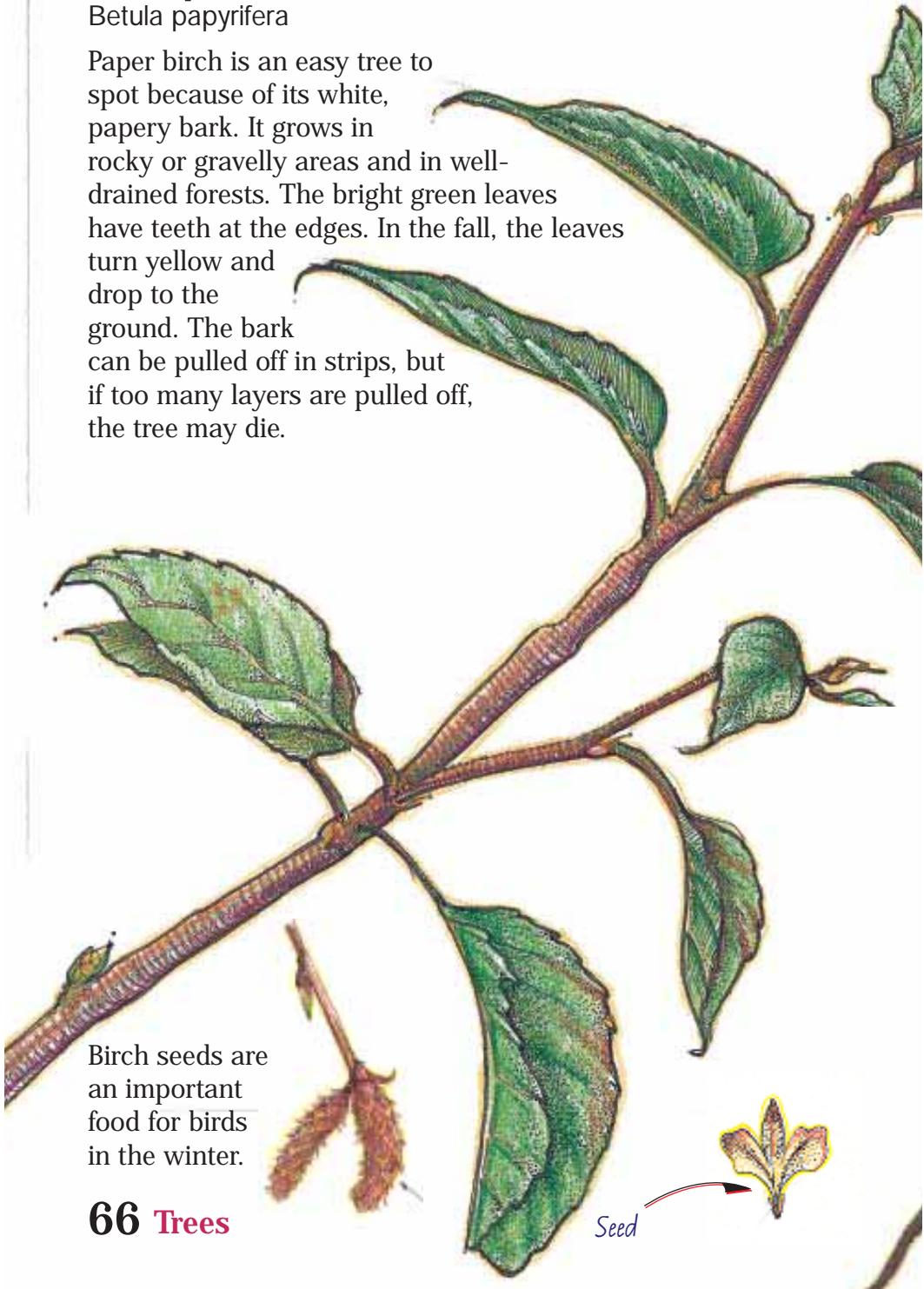
Jack pines are indicators of climate change. Scientists can take cores from the trees and study the rings. This will tell them what the weather was like before weather measurements were recorded.



Paper Birch

Betula papyrifera

Paper birch is an easy tree to spot because of its white, papery bark. It grows in rocky or gravelly areas and in well-drained forests. The bright green leaves have teeth at the edges. In the fall, the leaves turn yellow and drop to the ground. The bark can be pulled off in strips, but if too many layers are pulled off, the tree may die.



This is one useful plant:

Paper birch is best known for making canoes and baskets.

Wherever it grows in the North, it has been used by Aboriginal peoples for food, medicine, storage or decoration. You can even tap the trees for birch syrup!



Rulus Numeris Uno

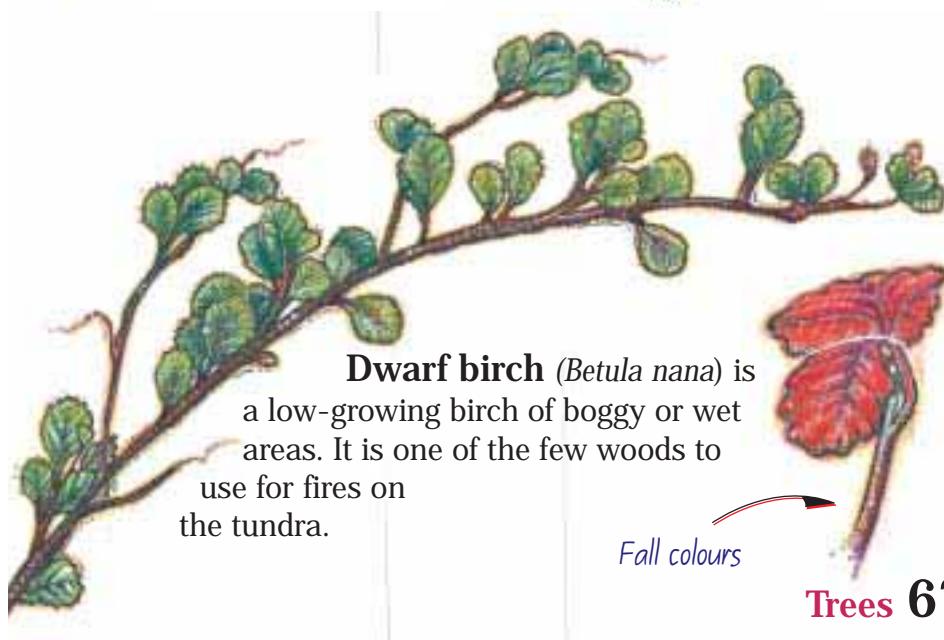
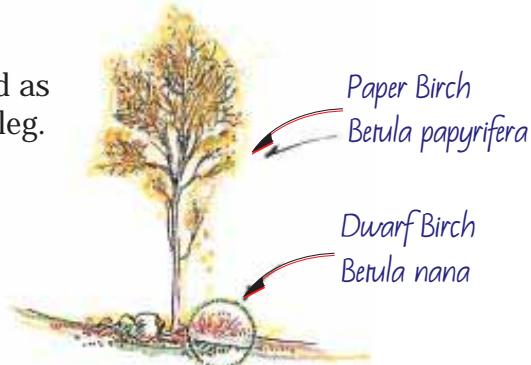
Remember Rule #1

Here are just a few of the things that birch wood has been used for:

- snowshoes
- toboggans
- knife handles
- drum frames
- paddles



Birch bark can also be used as a cast for a broken arm or leg.



Dwarf birch (*Betula nana*) is a low-growing birch of boggy or wet areas. It is one of the few woods to use for fires on the tundra.

Fall colours

Trees 67

Tamarack

Larix laricina

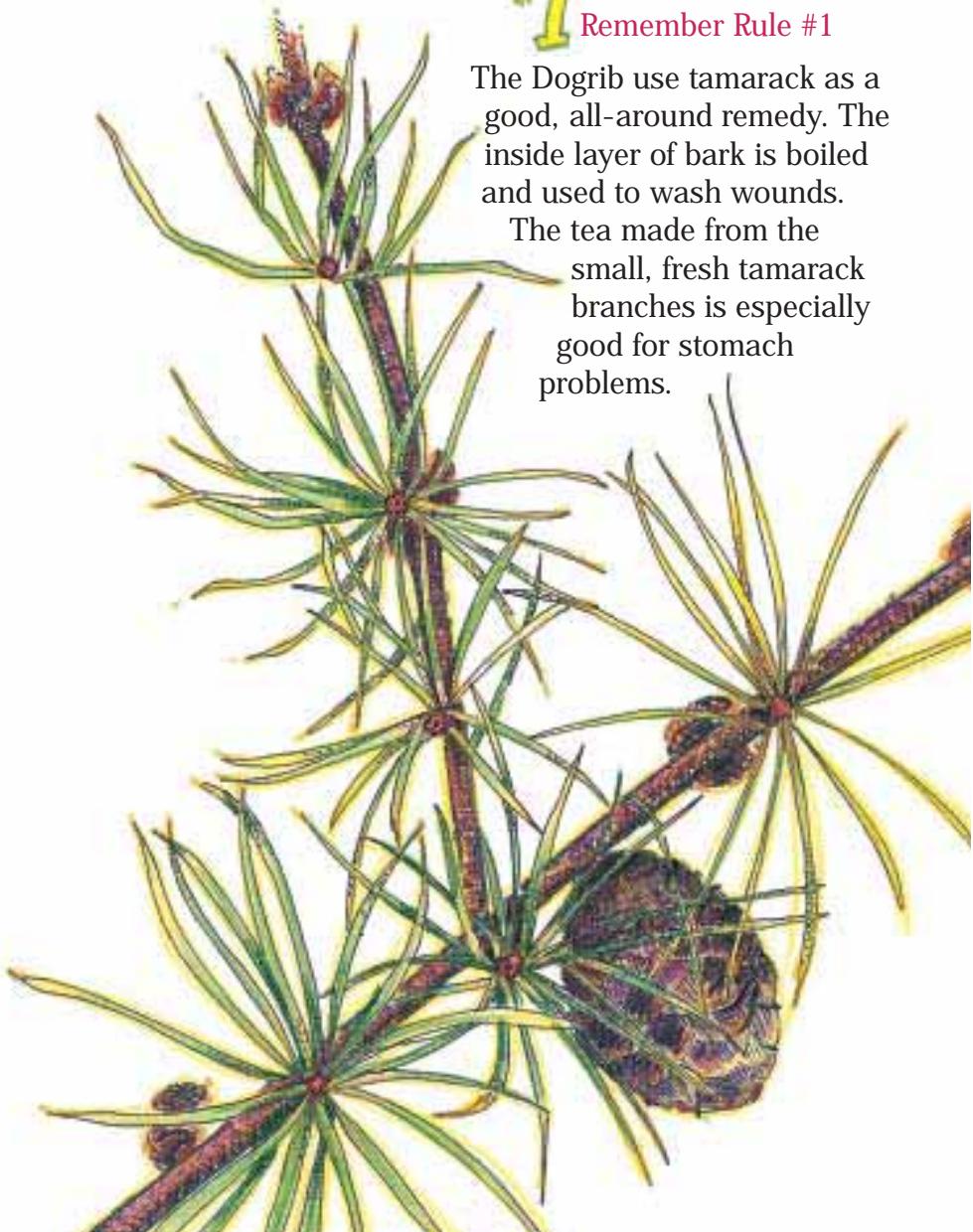
Tamarack grows in wet and boggy areas and in the mountains where there have been landslides. It has scaly bark and long, slender branches with little woody knobs (fascicles) that hold bundles of soft, green leaves.



Rulus Numeris Uno
Remember Rule #1

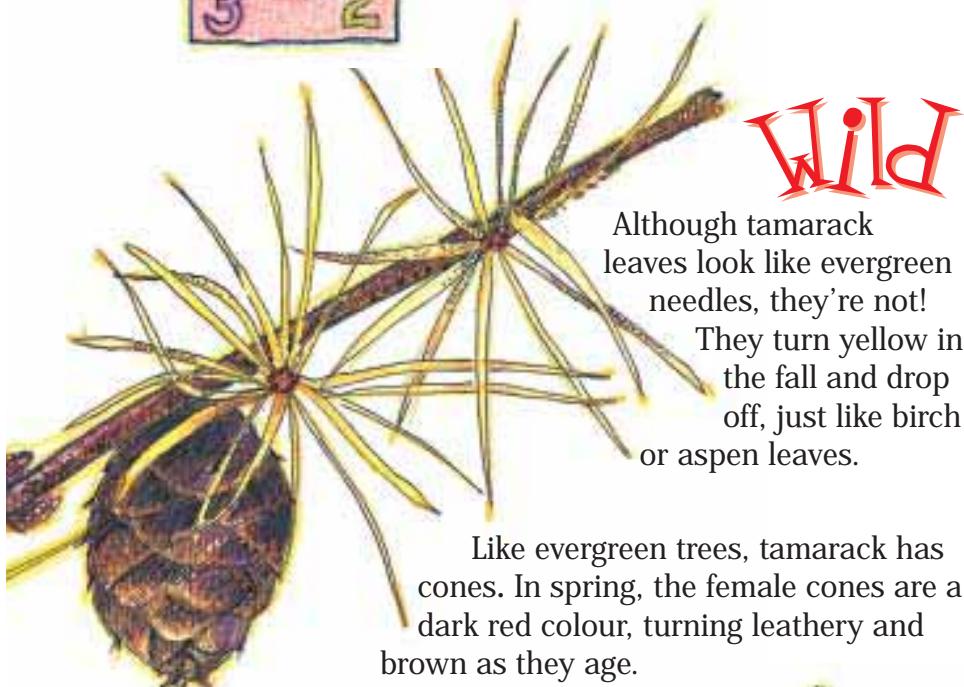
The Dogrib use tamarack as a good, all-around remedy. The inside layer of bark is boiled and used to wash wounds.

The tea made from the small, fresh tamarack branches is especially good for stomach problems.





Tamarack has recently replaced jack pine as the official territorial tree.

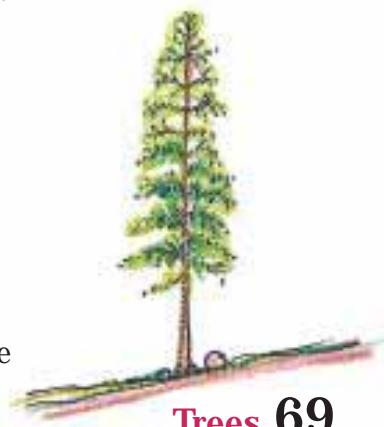


Finish this poem:

The tamarack looks evergreen
Standing high just like a _____.


Needles yellow, then they drop
Tamarack's bare right to the _____.

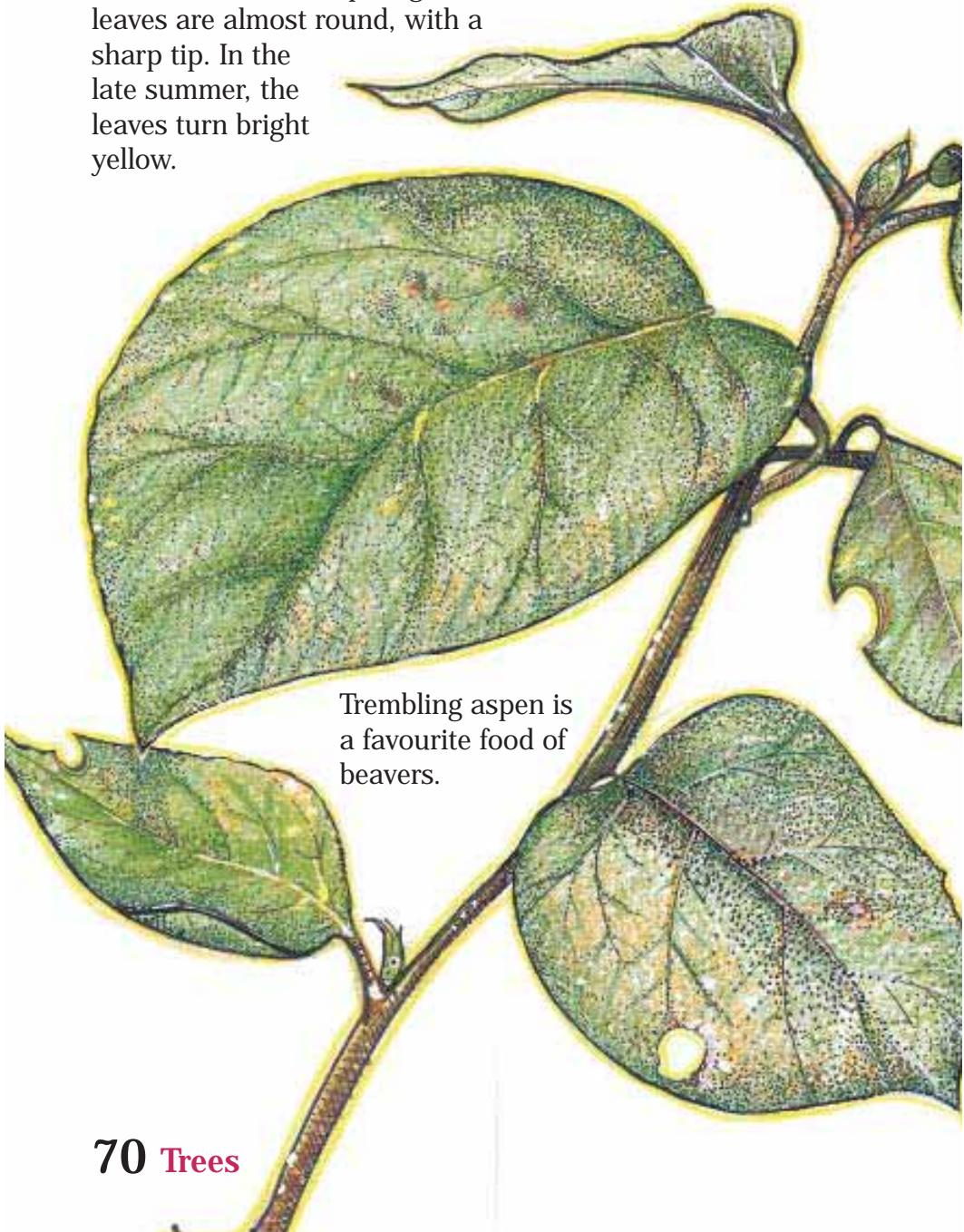
Now, write your own poem on a separate piece of paper.

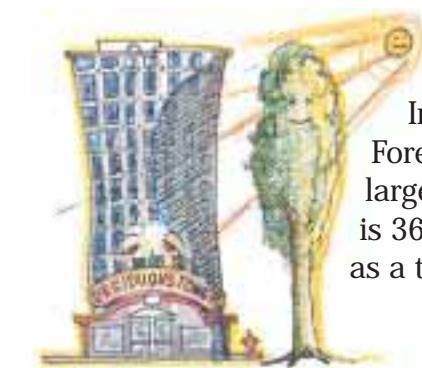


Trembling Aspen

Populus tremuloides

Trembling aspen is a common tree in forested areas of the NWT. The bark is smooth, pale green or white. The leaves are almost round, with a sharp tip. In the late summer, the leaves turn bright yellow.



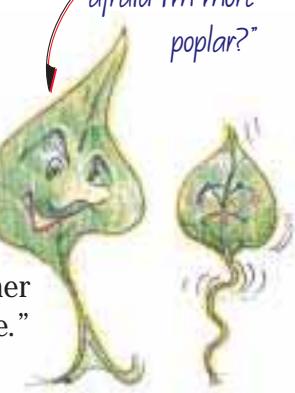


The World's Biggest!

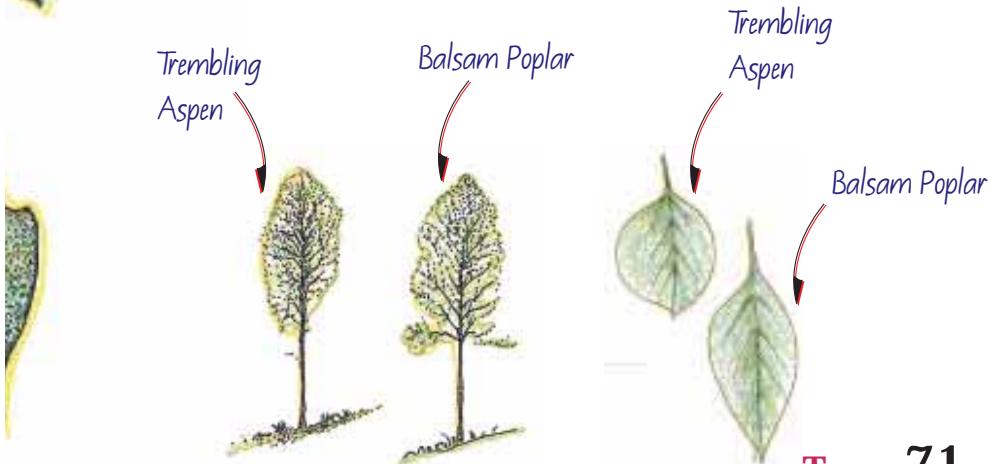
In the Muskeg River Demonstration Forest, close to Fort Liard, the world's largest recorded trembling aspen grows. It is 36 m high. That's about the same height as a ten-storey office building!



The leaf stalk of this plant is flattened at right angles to the flat surface of the leaf. With the slightest breeze, the leaf stalk moves in one direction, and the leaf blade moves the other way. This makes the leaf "tremble."



Balsam poplar (*Populus balsamifera*), a close relative to trembling aspen, is an important medicine tree for the Dogrib. Its buds are sticky and have a medicine smell.



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