

# DENVER ART MUSEUM

1300 LOGAN STREET, DENVER, COLORADO

DEPARTMENT OF INDIAN ART

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## INDIAN VEGETABLE DYES

Part I

LEAFLET 63

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1. **INTRODUCTORY.** The American Indians were found by the various white explorers to be using a very large number of plants as sources for dyes, stains and paints in a wide range of colors. Many of these formulas and practices are no longer used, others are still in existence, and a few new ones have been added to the list in recent times.

A complete list of all plants and of the dyes produced from them would be very long, and the compiling of it a tedious task. Nevertheless it should be done some day. To this end leaflets in this series will be issued from time to time giving partial lists and the references in which the data are found, so that some day the tireless worker who undertakes the major task will have his raw materials in more convenient form.

2. **METHODS OF USE.** The large majority of native vegetal dyes were made by boiling the plant materials. Sometimes the objects to be dyed were boiled with the dye, and sometimes not. The details vary too greatly for inclusion in this leaflet. Where boiling was not used, the text so states.

SCIENTIFIC NAME	COMMON NAME	PART OF PLANT	OBJECT COLORED	TRIBE
<b>BLACK</b>				
<i>Acer saccharinum</i>	Soft maple	Twigs and bark (With ferrous clay)	Hides	Winnebago and Omaha
<i>Acer</i>	Maple	Inner bark and leaves (with clay)	Porcupine quills	Omaha
<i>Castilleja integra</i>	Indian paint brush	Bark of root (with minerals)	Deerskin	Zuni
<i>Cornus canadensis</i>	Western flowering dogwood	Branches and bark	Basket material	Thompson River Salish
<i>Corylus americana</i>	Hazel	Inner bark (with butternut)	Rushes	Ojibwa
<i>Dondia suffrutens</i>	Sea blight	Whole plant	Rushes for basketry	Cahuilla
<i>Juglans cinerea</i>	Butternut	Inner bark (with hazel)	Rushes	Ojibwa
<i>Juglans</i>	Butternut	Bark	Rushes for mats; porcupine quills	Menomini
<i>Juglans nigra</i>	Black walnut	Root		Ponca, Pawnee, Winnebago, Sioux Omaha
<i>Quercus lobata</i>	California white oak	Bark (with rusty iron)	Basket material	Maidu
<i>Quercus macro- carpa</i>	Bur oak	Inner bark (with hazel burs, butter- nut bark and earth)	Porcupine quills	Ojibwa
<i>Rhus diversiloba</i>	Poison oak	Juice	Basket material	Pomo
<i>Sambucus mexicana</i>	Elder	Berry stems	Basket material	Cahuilla
<b>BLUE</b>				
<i>Commandra pallida</i>		Roots	Basket material	Thompson River Salish
<i>Corylus</i>	Hazel	Roots		Thompson River Salish
<i>Delphinium men- ziesii</i>	Larkspur	Flowers	Clothing	Thompson River Salish
<i>Delphinium scapo- sum</i>	Larkspur	Flowers	Basket material	Hopi
<i>Helianthus petiolaris</i>	Sunflower	Seeds	Basket material	Hopi
<b>BROWN</b>				
<i>Alnus</i>	Alder	Bark	Seal fur	Eskimo
<i>Juglans</i>	Butternut	Bark	Leather	Menomini
<i>Parosela emoryi</i>	Parosela	Branches	Rushes for basketry	Cahuilla
<b>GRAY</b>				
<i>Atriples cenescens</i>		Ashes of burnt plant	Corn bread	Hopi

SCIENTIFIC NAME	COMMON NAME	PART OF PLANT	OBJECT COLORED	TRIBE
		GREEN		
Algae	Water scum	Whole plant		Thompson River Salish
Algae	Pond scum	Whole plant	Wooden objects	Plains-
Chenopodium album	Lamb's quarter	Whole plant (?)	Bows and arrows	Pawnee
Thuja plicata	Giant arbor vitae	Twigs and leaves		Thompson River Salish
		ORANGE		
Cuscuta paradoxa	Dodder or Love vine	Whole plant	Feathers	Pawnee
		PINK		
Amaranthus palmeri	Amaranth	Flowers	Basketry	Hopi
Chenopodium			Basketry	Thompson River Salish
		PURPLE		
Acer	Maple	Rotted wood	Porcupine quills	Ojibwa
Berberis fremontii	Barberry	Berries	Body and ceremon- ial objects	Zuni
Rubus leucodermis	Whitebark raspberry	Berries		Thompson River Salish
Vaccinium mem- branaceum	Blueberry	Berries	Basketry	Flinkit
	(See also the plants under PINK, which produce purple also.)			
		RED		
Abies concolor	White fir	Bark	Deerskin	Tewa
Alnus	Alder	Bark	Basketry	Thompson River Salish
Alnus incana	Alder	Inner bark (with other plants)	Porcupine quills	Ojibwa
Alnus incana and Cercarpus parvi- folius	Alder and Moun- tain mahogany	Bark of 1st; Root of 2nd	Buckskin; wool	Navaho
Alnus oregona	Alder	Bark	Leather	Thompson River Salish
Alnus rhombifolia	Alder	Bark	Basketry	Yuki, Hupa
Alnus tenuifolia	Alder	Bark	Deerskin	Zuni
Amaranthus palmeri	Amaranth	Seeds	Corn bread	Hopi
Amaranthus pani- culatus	Amaranth	Seeds	Corn bread	Hopi
Betula papyrifera	White birch	Inner bark (with dogwood, oak and cedar bark ashes)	Porcupine quills	Ojibwa
Blitum capitatum	Strawberry blight	Calyx (not boiled)	Body, wood, leather	Thompson River Salish
Coreopsis cardami- nefolia	Coreopsis	Flowers	Yarn	Zuni
Cornus stolonifera	Red-osier dogwood	Inner bark (with birch, oak and ashes of cedar bark)	Porcupine quills	Ojibwa
Fungus, unidenti- fied				Thompson River Salish
Juniperus virginiana	Cedar	Inner bark	Matting	Ojibwa
Lithospermum angustifolium	Indian paint	Roots (not boiled)	Leather and body	Thompson River Salish
Lithospermum carolinense	Puccoon	Dried root (with ochre)	Porcupine quills	Ojibwa
Orthocarpus luteus	Yellow orthocarpus	Whole plant (not boiled)	Gopher skins	Blackfoot
Phytolacca ameri- cana	Pokeberry, ink- berry or redweed	Berry (not boiled)	Horses and per- sonal ornaments	Oto, Pawnee, Ponca

SCIENTIFIC NAME	COMMON NAME	PART OF PLANT	OBJECT COLORED	TRIBE
<i>Rhus glabra</i>	Smooth sumac	RED—(Cont.) Berry		Thompson River Salish
<i>Sanguinaria cana-</i> <i>densis</i>	Bloodroot	Root	Quills, rattles, body matting	Menomini, Ponca, Winnebago, Omaha
<i>Thelesperma gracile</i>	Thelesperma	Whole plant	Basketry	Hopi
<i>Tsuga</i>	Hemlock	Bark	Porcupine quills, matting	Menomini
		YELLOW		
<i>Alnus incana</i>	Alder	Inner bark	Porcupine quills	Ojibwa
<i>Berberis nervosa</i>	Oregon grape	Twigs and bark	Basketry	Klikitat, Snohomish, Hupa, Thompson River Salish
<i>Bigelovia graveolus</i>	Rabbit brush	Flowers	Wool	Navaho
<i>Bigelovia howardii</i>	Rabbit brush	Flowers	Body	Hopi
<i>Carthamus tinctor-</i> <i>ius</i>	False saffron		Basketry, bread	Hopi
<i>Chrysothamnus</i> <i>bigelovii</i>	Rabbit brush	Flowers	Wool	Zuni, Tewa
<i>Coptis trifolia</i>	Gold thread	Root	Porcupine quills	Ojibwa
<i>Evernia vulpina</i>	Wolf moss	Whole plant	Porcupine quills basketry, body	Blackfoot, Klamath, Tlinkit, Thompson River Salish, Hupa
<i>Populus sargentii</i>	Cottonwood	Seed vessels or leaf buds	Feathers on arrows	Pawnee, Omaha, Dakota
<i>Psilostrophe tage-</i> <i>tina</i>	Thistle family	Flowers	Masks, body	Zuni
<i>Rhus</i>	Sumac	Roots	Porcupine quills, matting	Menomini
<i>Rhus glabra</i>	Smooth sumac	Roots		Omaha, Winnebago
<i>Usnea barbata</i>	Lichen	Whole plant	Porcupine quills	Dakota

Compiled from the following sources by Jessie Matson, under the direction of F. H. Douglas:

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