

Uxraah: Native Edible Berries



Name: _____

Introduction

Many native fleshy fruits and berries were available to California Indians and these plants responded to their management by fire and seasonal pruning; early photographs show large, concentrated patches of accessible berries from which one could gather much fruit in a short time. Such fleshy fruits or berries were gathered in substantial quantities and often dried and stored for winter use. Fruits such as huckleberries (*Vaccinium*), gooseberry (*Ribes*), wild grape (*Vitis californica*), wild strawberries (*Fragaria*), blackberries, thimbleberries, blackcap raspberries (*Rubus*), holly leaf cherry (*Prunus ilicifolia*), elderberry (*Sambucus mexicana*), and many others were valued. The medicinal values of these fruits “were well known to our ancestors...” (2012 Anderson & House).

Please keep in mind that this booklet reflects the intellectual property of the Karuk people. We trust you will respect that fact, as well as respect and honor the plant resources themselves.

Yôotva!

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Uxraah

Native Edible Berries

1. evergreen huckleberries
2. blue elderberries
3. service berries
4. California blackberries
5. salal berries
6. red huckleberries
7. Sierra gooseberries
8. choke cherries
9. madrone berries
10. manzanita berries
11. strawberries
12. toyon berries
13. thimble berries
14. black caps
15. wild grapes



Karuk name: _____

Common name: **evergreen huckleberry**

Latin name: *Vaccinium ovatum*

Ripe berries are gathered in the late summer-fall/early winter and eaten fresh. The darker purple berry variety is sweeter after the first frost. Berries are dried, canned or frozen and later eaten plain or mixed to make desserts and syrups. Traditionally, the berries were sometimes crushed in a basket with a pestle with a little water, and eaten with a spoon (Ferrara, 2004).

When harvested, the entire tips of the branches are pruned off. Those tips can be brought home and the berries can be removed and sorted. Like other native berries, evergreen huckleberries are high in antioxidants and micronutrients and relative to their sugar content (Anderson, 2006).

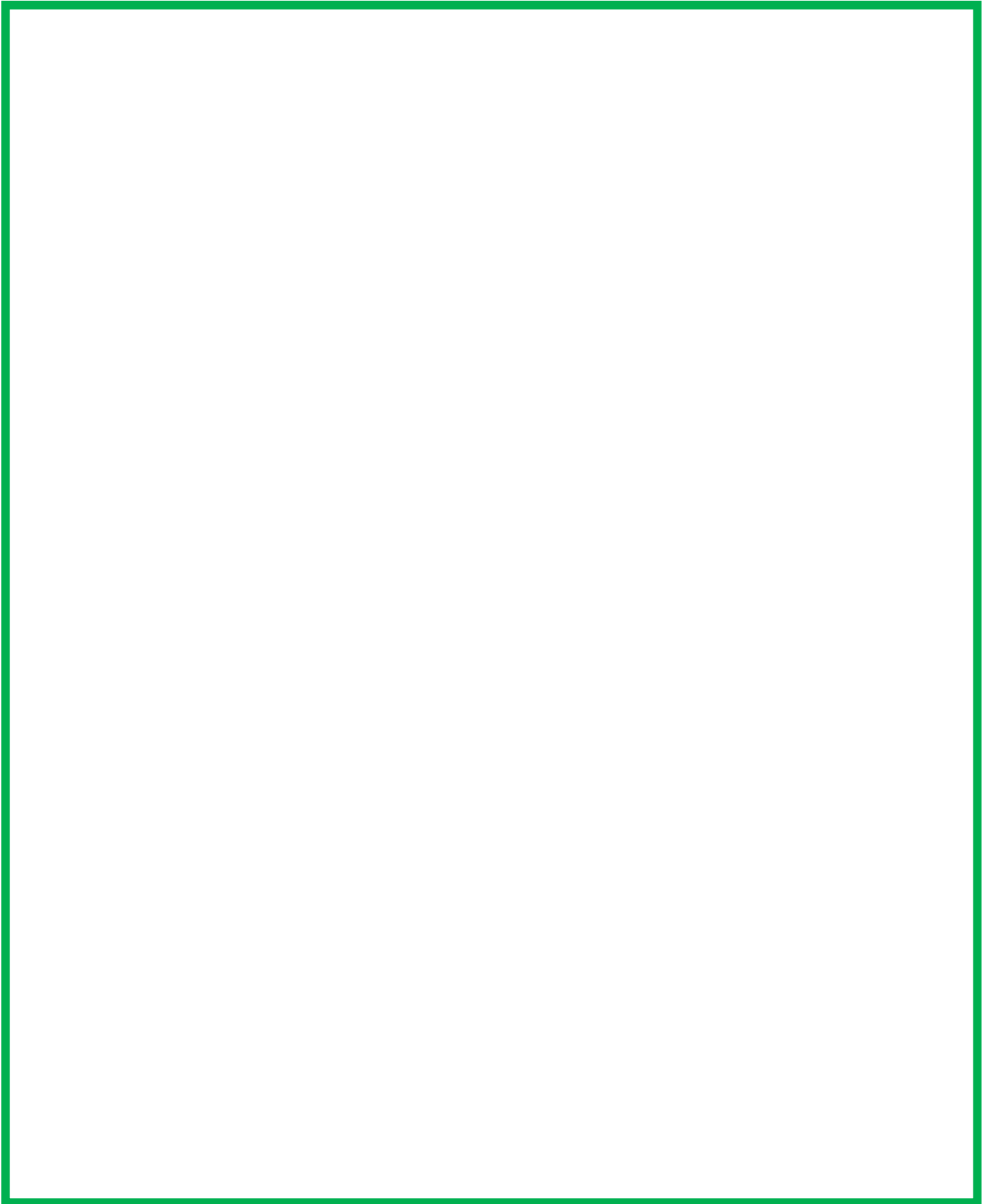


The leaves are additionally used medicinally as a tea to treat diabetes and insomnia (Peters, 2010).

Huckleberry likes to grow at the edges and in clearings in a mixed conifer forest (Jepson, 2016). They have been actively managed by fire so they will “grow up good” (Harrington, 1932).



Draw or tape pressed and dried plant specimens here:





Karuk name: _____ Common name: **blue elderberry**

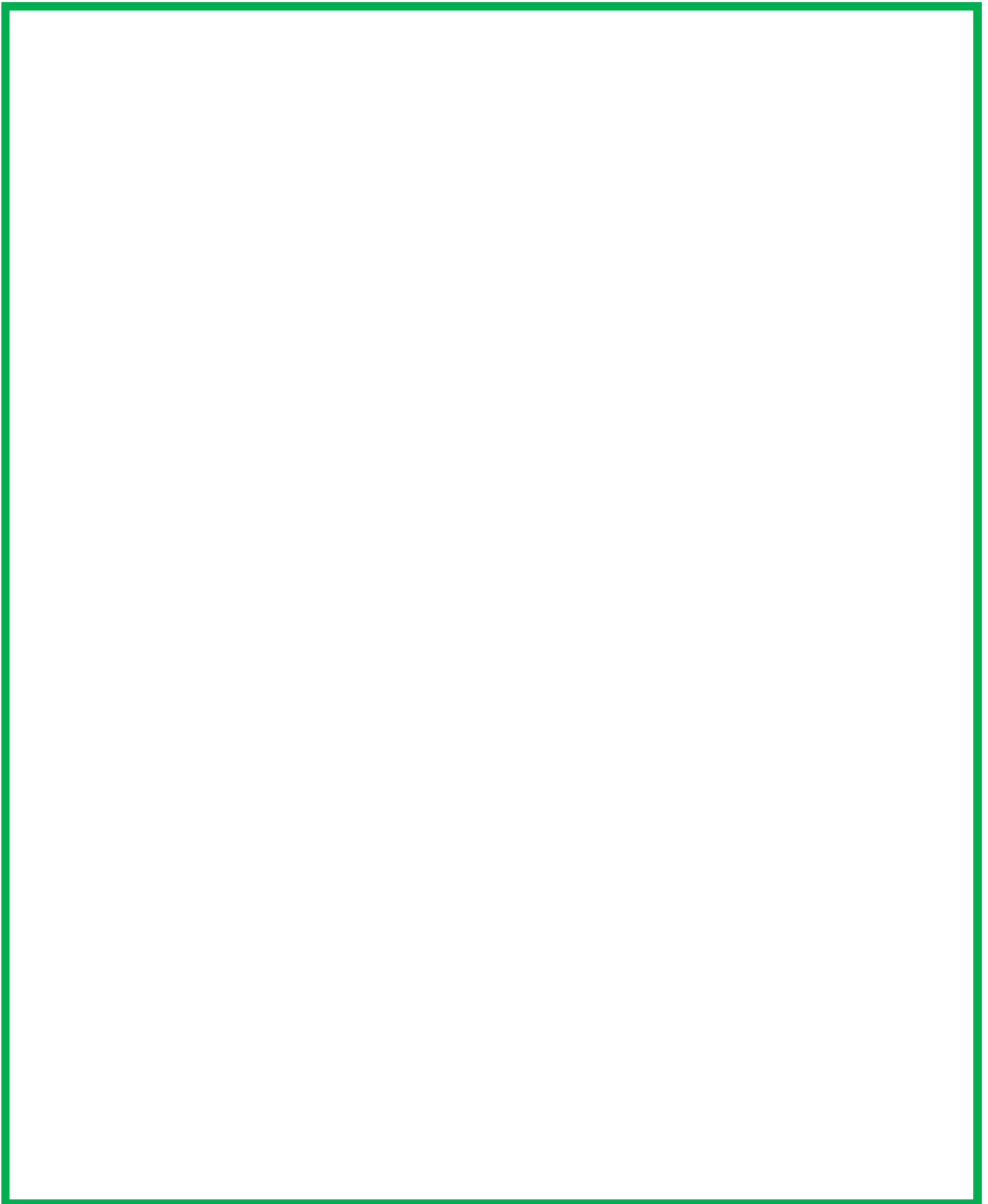
Latin name: *Sambucus caerulea*

Both the berries and the flowers can be eaten. The berries are eaten for food and medicine, containing high amounts of antioxidants and minerals, such as vitamin C, vitamin A, calcium, phosphorus, and iron (Anderson, 2006). They can be dried and stored, and the dried berries can be reconstituted with a little water and mashed to make a sweet paste. Additionally, they can be cooked and preserved as jam, jelly, or made into a cough syrup for respiratory illness. Josephine warns that eating them raw will make some people sick (Peters, 2010).

Fresh or dried, the flowers are steeped to make a potent tea to reduce fever (Peters).

The core of lower branches is pithy and easily hollowed out, making this wood good for making traditional vertical four-holed flutes. During the Brush Dance for a sick child, some medicine women have been known to use a branch of this plant to sprinkle the child with their own personal medicinal formulas.

Draw or tape pressed and dried plant specimens here:



Karuk name: _____

Common name: **service berry**

Latin name: *Amelanchier alnifolia*

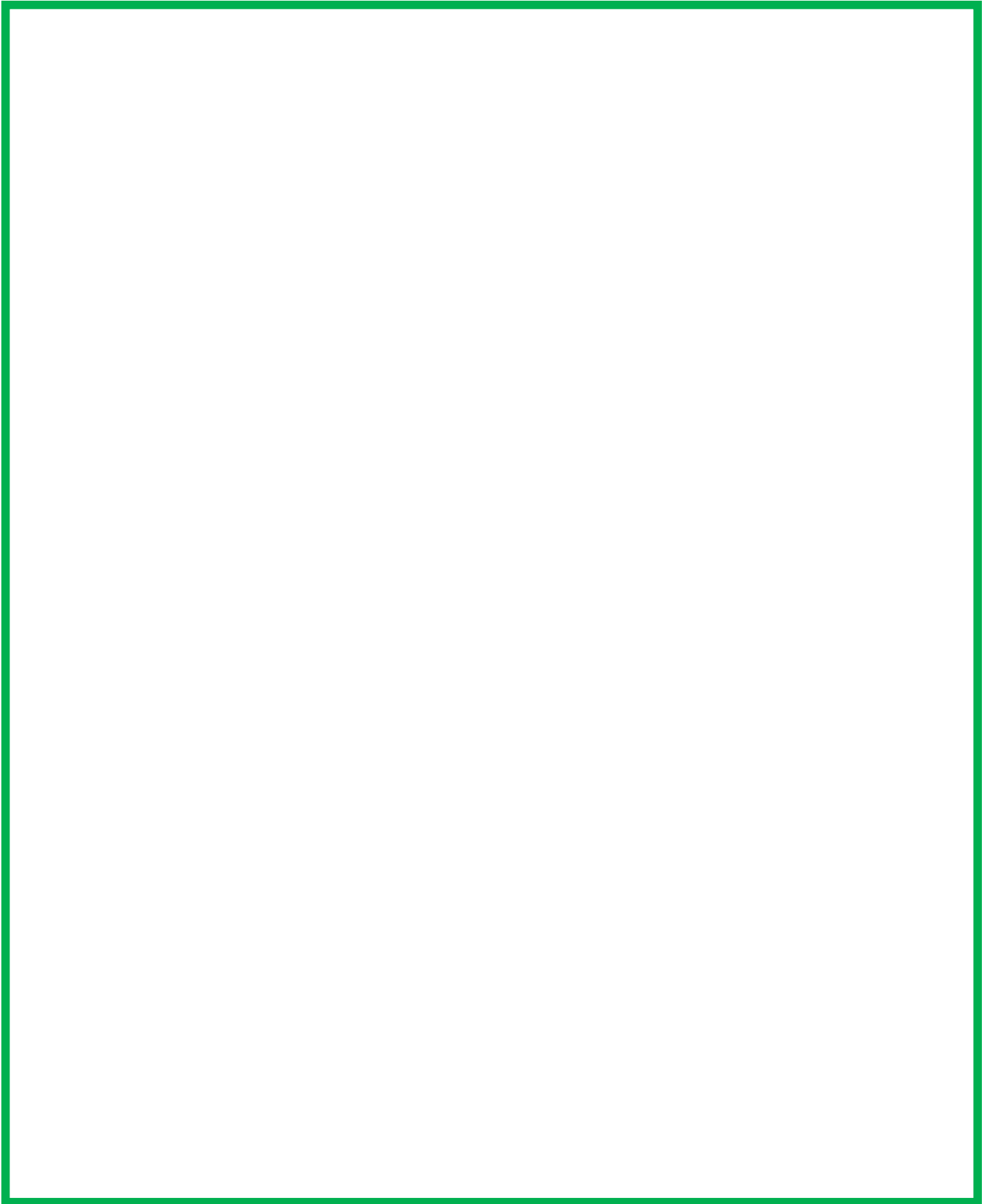
These berries have a sweet, nutty flavor. They can be eaten fresh or gathered and dried. The dried berries have traditionally been stored in a **sípnuuk**, or large storage basket, covered with an **áatikir**, a burden basket, and set on the shelf that runs around the inside of the house (Gifford & Schenck, 1952).

Service berry twigs and stems have been used to reinforce basket hopper rims for acorn cracking baskets. It's wood can be used, generally, wherever a basket needs stiffening, and to make basket handles. Georgia Orcutt was known to have said that the wood is used to make the fore-shafts of salmon harpoons (Gifford & Schenck).

Like other native berries, these plants benefit from cultural fire to increase the quality of the sticks and berries.



Draw or tape pressed and dried plant specimens here:



Karuk name: _____ “collection of salmon eggs”

Common name: **California blackberry** or **trailing blackberry**

Latin name: *Rubus ursinus*

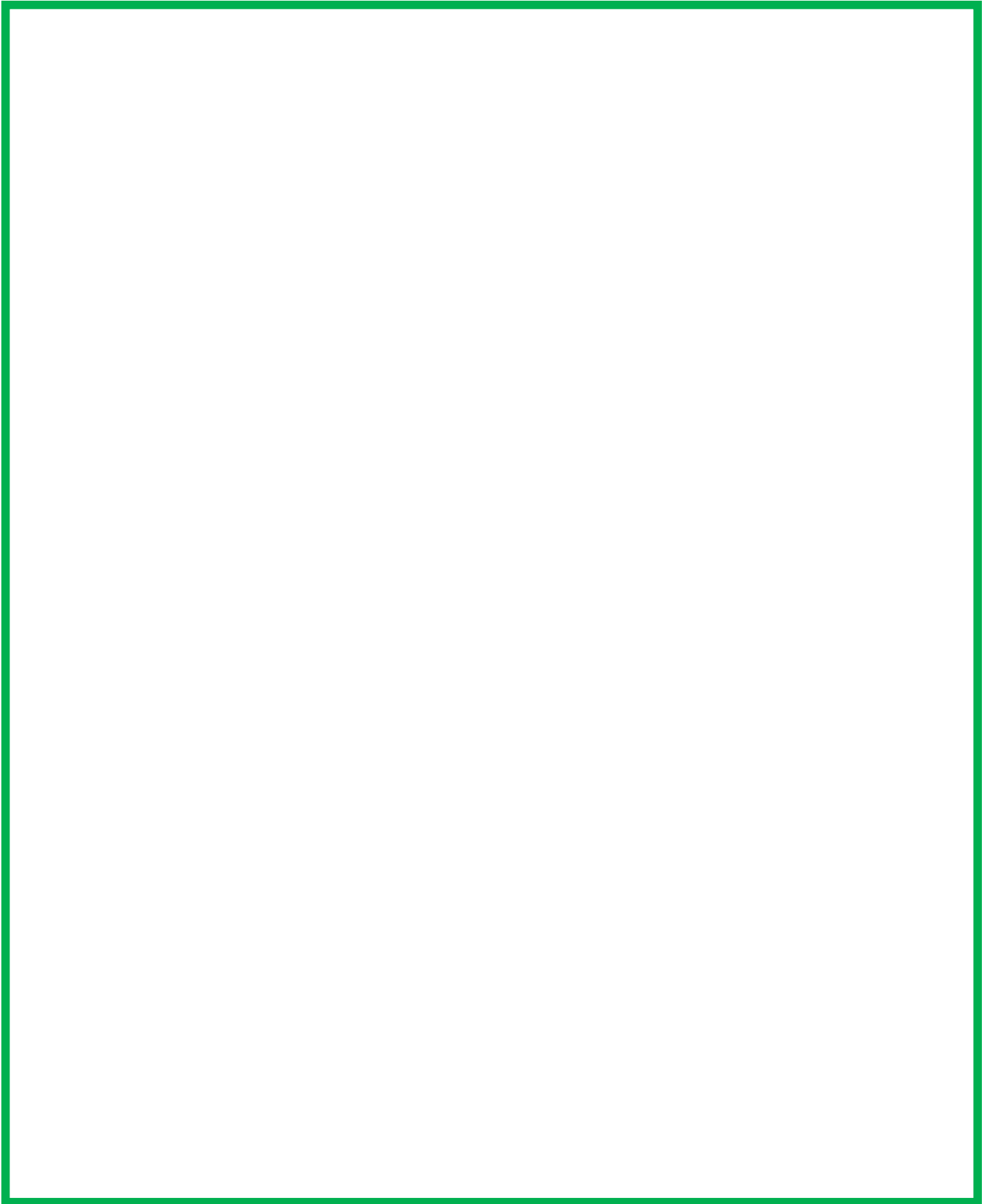
The berries are eaten in season and can be preserved for jam, jellies, and as additions to desserts. Ethnographic accounts suggest that they were not traditionally preserved, but just eaten raw (Gifford & Schenck, 1952).

This native blackberry is parent to several blackberry cultivars like loganberry and boysenberry. It trails along the ground likes open disturbed areas, just like the more aggressive and invasive Himalayan blackberry (Jepson, 2016).

Josephine Peters talks about how much more common they used to be, and how Himalayan blackberries have encroached on their habitat: “We had the old-fashioned kind of blackberries that grew all over the mine. It had a different shape and leaf [than those growing in the Hoopa Valley today]” (Peters, 2010).



Draw or tape pressed and dried plant specimens here:



Karuk name: _____ literally, “big huckleberry”

Common name: **salal** Latin name: *Gaultheria shallon*

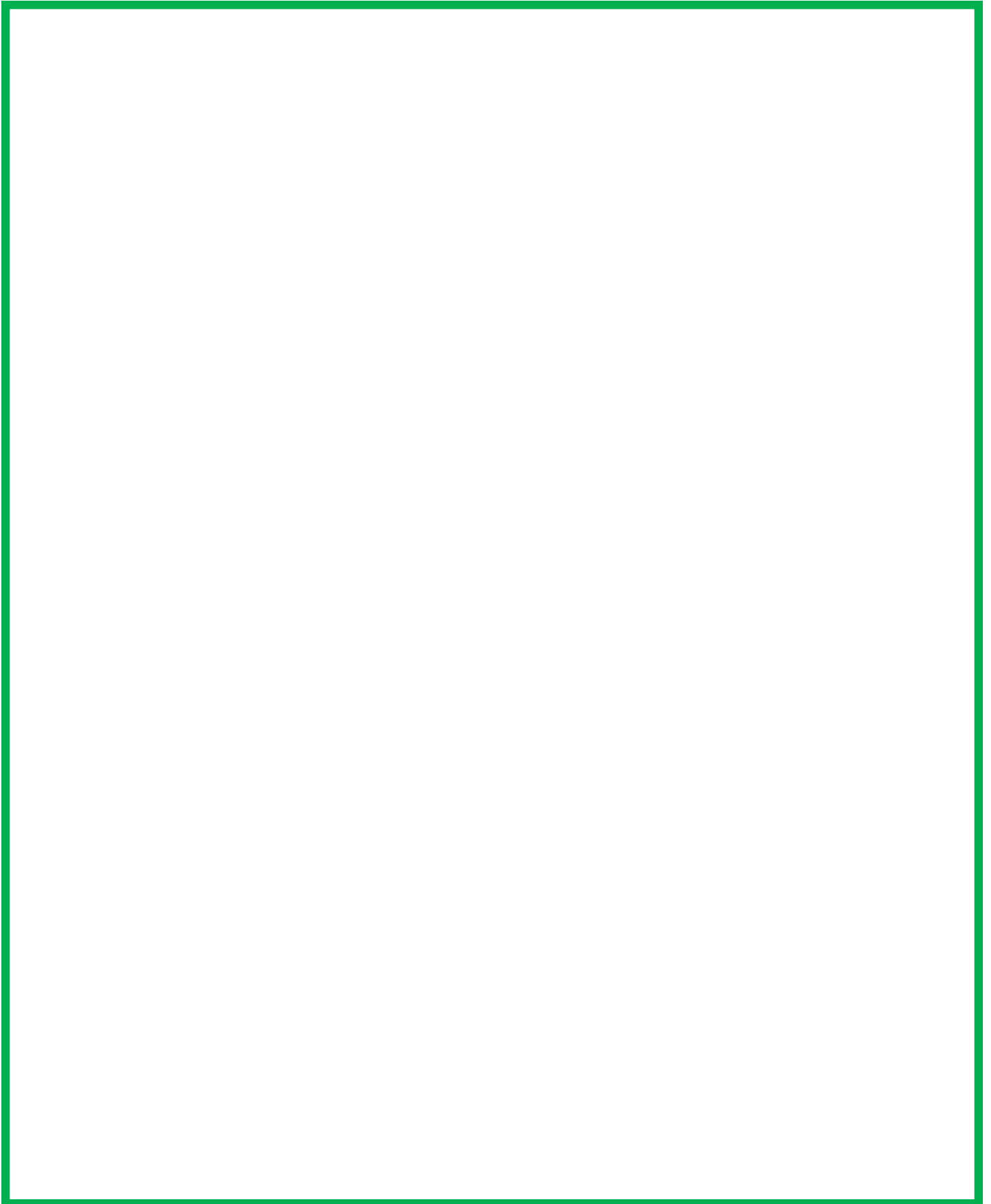
Like their Karuk name describes, these are larger than most native berries, providing substantial nutrition to gatherers. They are gathered and eaten when ripe in the late summer. They can be eaten raw or preserved in jams, jellies, or pies. The Yurok have been said to prepare a traditional dish of smelt with a raw salal berry sauce (Anderson, 2006).

These berries are found in moist forest margins ranging from sea level to about 4000ft, although seem more abundant in areas closer to the coast (Jepson, 2016).

Mamie Offield says her mother used the berries to rub over basket caps to stain them black (Gifford & Schenck, 1952).



Draw or tape pressed and dried plant specimens here:



Karuk name: _____ Common name: **red huckleberry**

Latin name: *Vaccinium parvifolium*

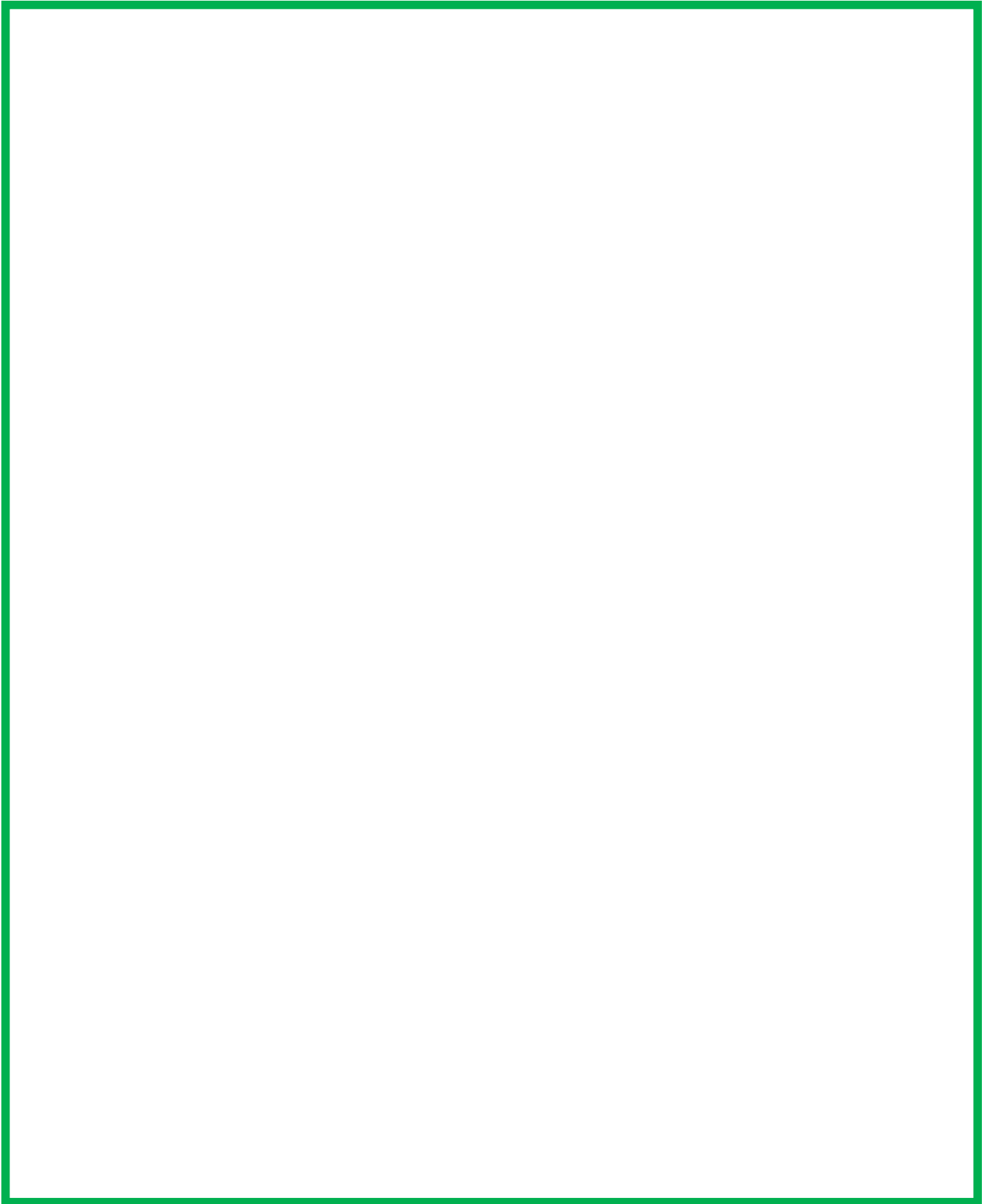
The red berries are enjoyed raw, ripening in the late summer or early fall. The red huckleberry differs from the evergreen huckleberry in that it has tender deciduous leaves, and it grows higher up in the mountains in wet, shaded the gulches (Jepson, 2016).

People have used the stems and twigs of this plant to make good brooms, “because they are pliable and do not break off as the *Chamaecyparis lawsoniana* branches do” (Gifford & Schenck, 1952).

These berries seem also to benefit from cultural burning and pruning (Anderson, 2010).



Draw or tape pressed and dried plant specimens here:



Karuk name: _____ Common name: **Sierra gooseberry**

Latin name: *Ribes roezlii var cruentum*

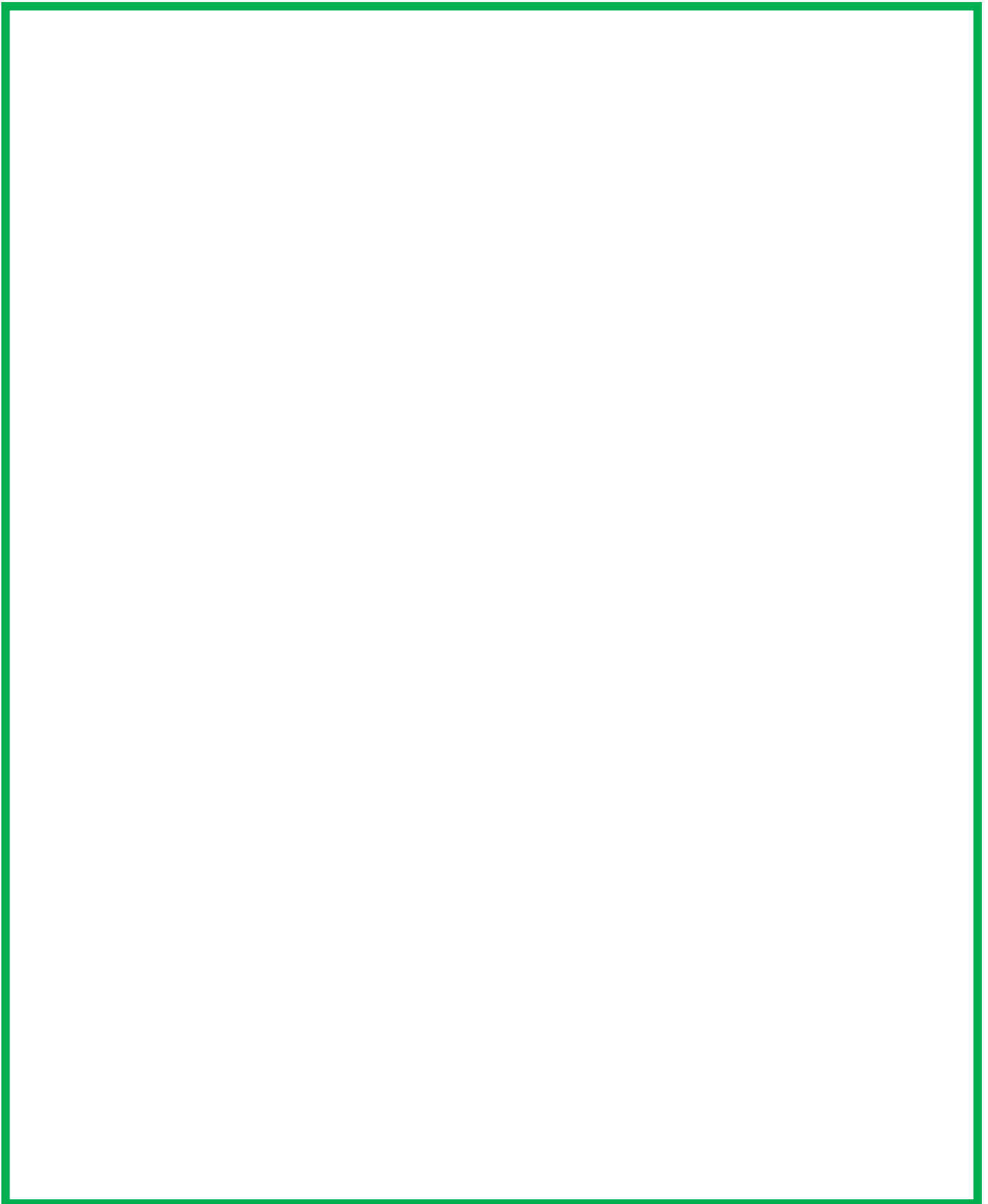
Since gooseberries have little thorns on their surface, traditional methods of picking and processing are helpful to prevent getting pricked!

Phoebe Maddux's mother taught her to gather by setting a basket under the bush and hitting the branches with a stick until the berries fall in. The prickles can be removed by rubbing an empty **ássip** or basket cup over the berries without rupturing the skin. Then the berries can be tossed and winnowed using the basket until they "have nothing on" (Ferrara, 2004).

Traditionally, the berries were eaten raw and not preserved by drying (Gifford & Schenck, 1952). Josephine Peters talked about making gooseberry pie with her maternal grandmother, smashing up the fruits and adding cornstarch for the pie filling (Peters, 2010).



Draw or tape pressed and dried plant specimens here:



Karuk name: _____ Common name: **choke cherry**

Latin name: *Prunus virginiana var. demissa*

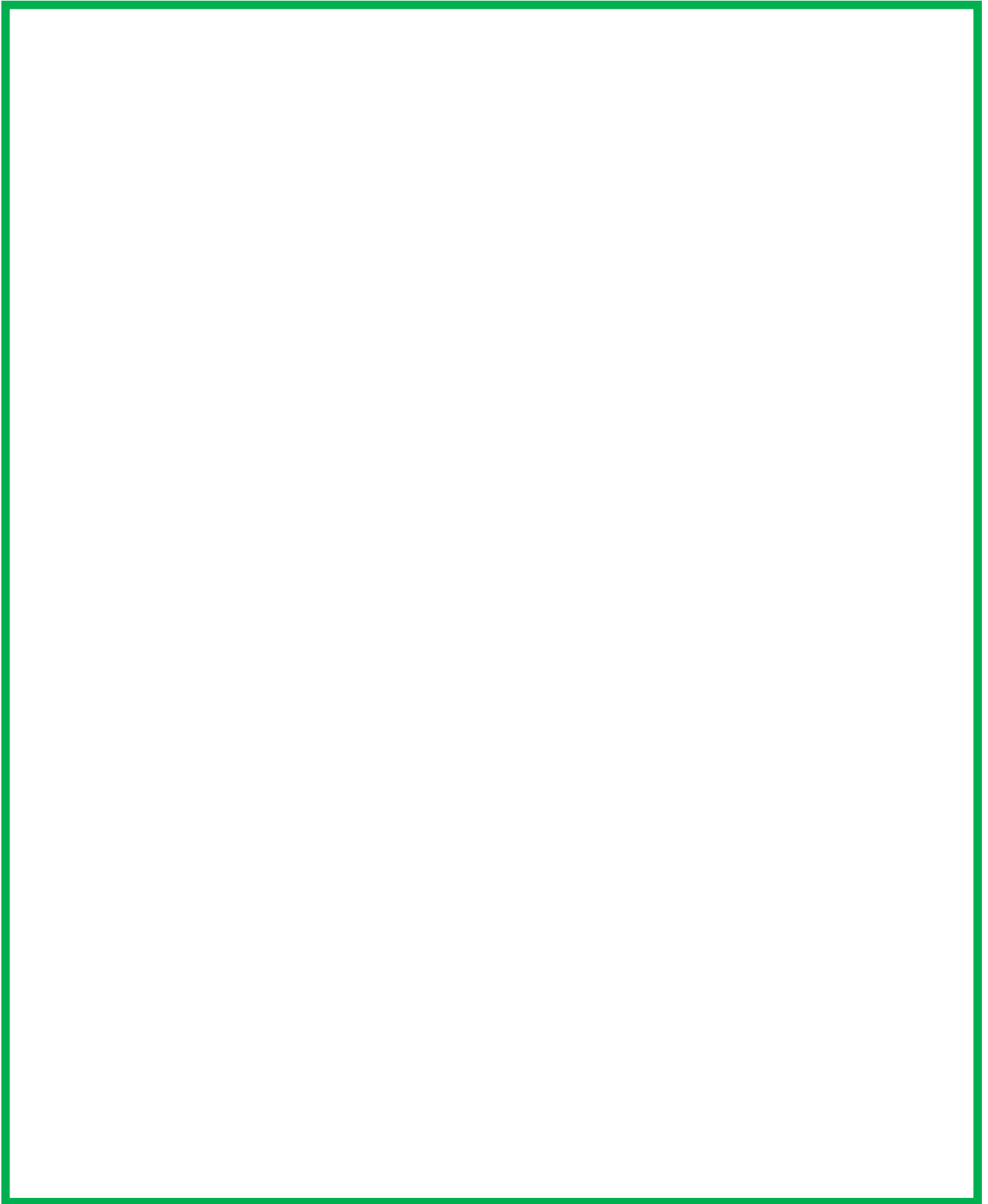
The berries have a kind of a bitter taste, but are been eaten when ripe and not typically preserved (Gifford & Schenck, 1952). Like other native berries with dark color, they contain high amounts of antioxidants despite being bitter (Anderson, 2006).

A medicine is made by scraping the bark off the twigs. The scrapings are put beside the nose of a little baby when it has a cold (Gifford & Schenck).

Josephine Peters was taught to make a tea of even amounts of choke-cherry bark and dogwood bark to lower blood pressure and regulate the heartbeat; as she puts it, it “increases the force of the heart action” (Peters, 2010).



Draw or tape pressed and dried plant specimens here:



Karuk name: _____

Common name: **Madrone berry**

Latin name: *Arbutus menziesii*

People gather the berries in the late fall by shaking the tree and catching them on the ground. The berries can be steamed, then dried, then stored in a *sípnuk*, or a storage basket. The berries have been traditionally steamed thus: “A little water is put in an acorn-cooking basket and heated with hot stones. Then they fill the basket with madrone berries and put madrone leaves on top. After the berries are thoroughly steamed, they are dried on basket platters and stored.” They were soaked in warm water before eating, sometimes mixed with pounded manzanita berries (Gifford & Schenck, 1952).

The bark of the tree can be infused in a tea used as medicine for diabetes (Peters, 2010).

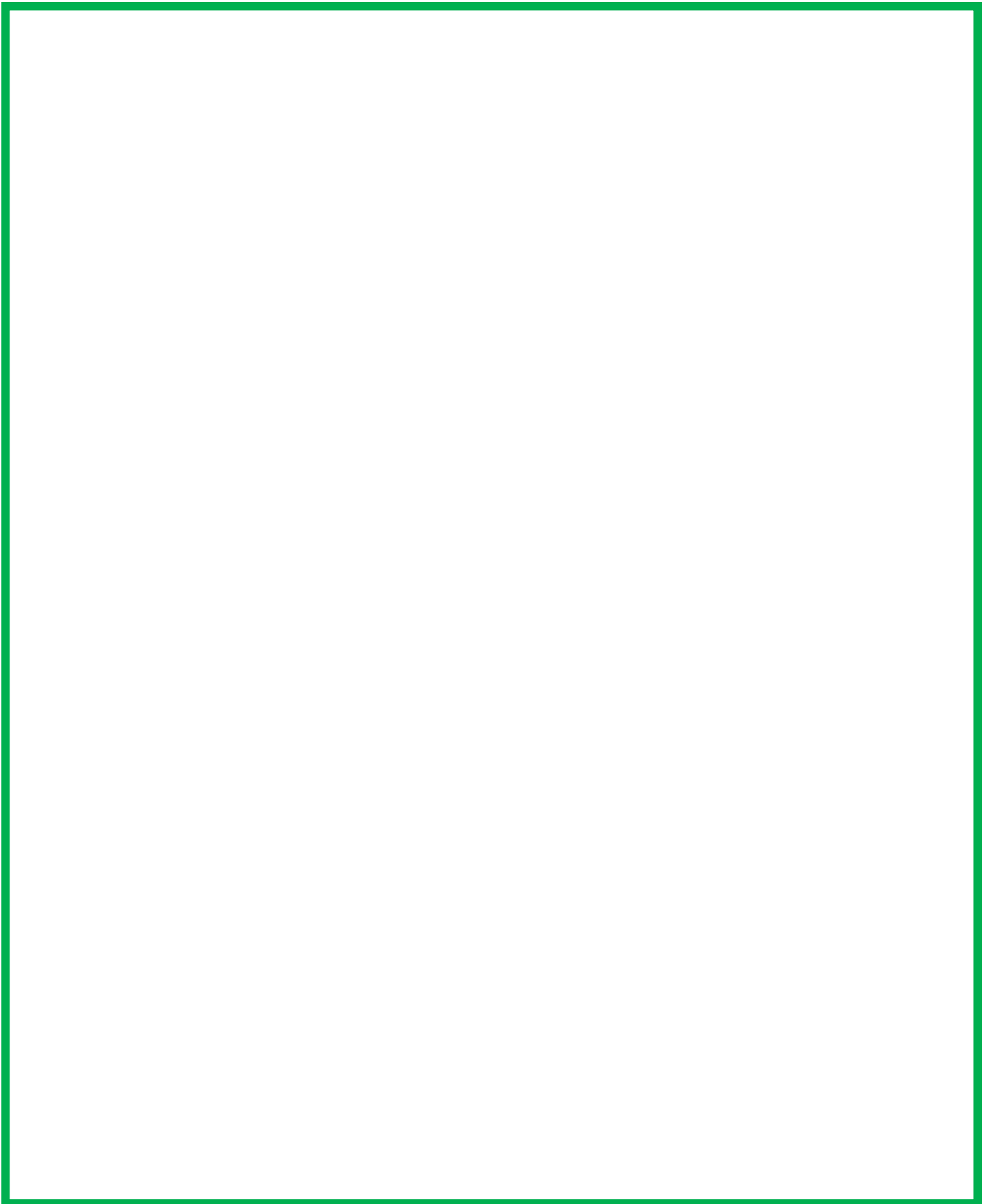


kusripísh'iikiv:

madrone berry necklace



Draw or tape pressed and dried plant specimens here:



Karuk name: _____

Common name: **manzanita berry**

Latin name: *Arctostaphylos manzanita*

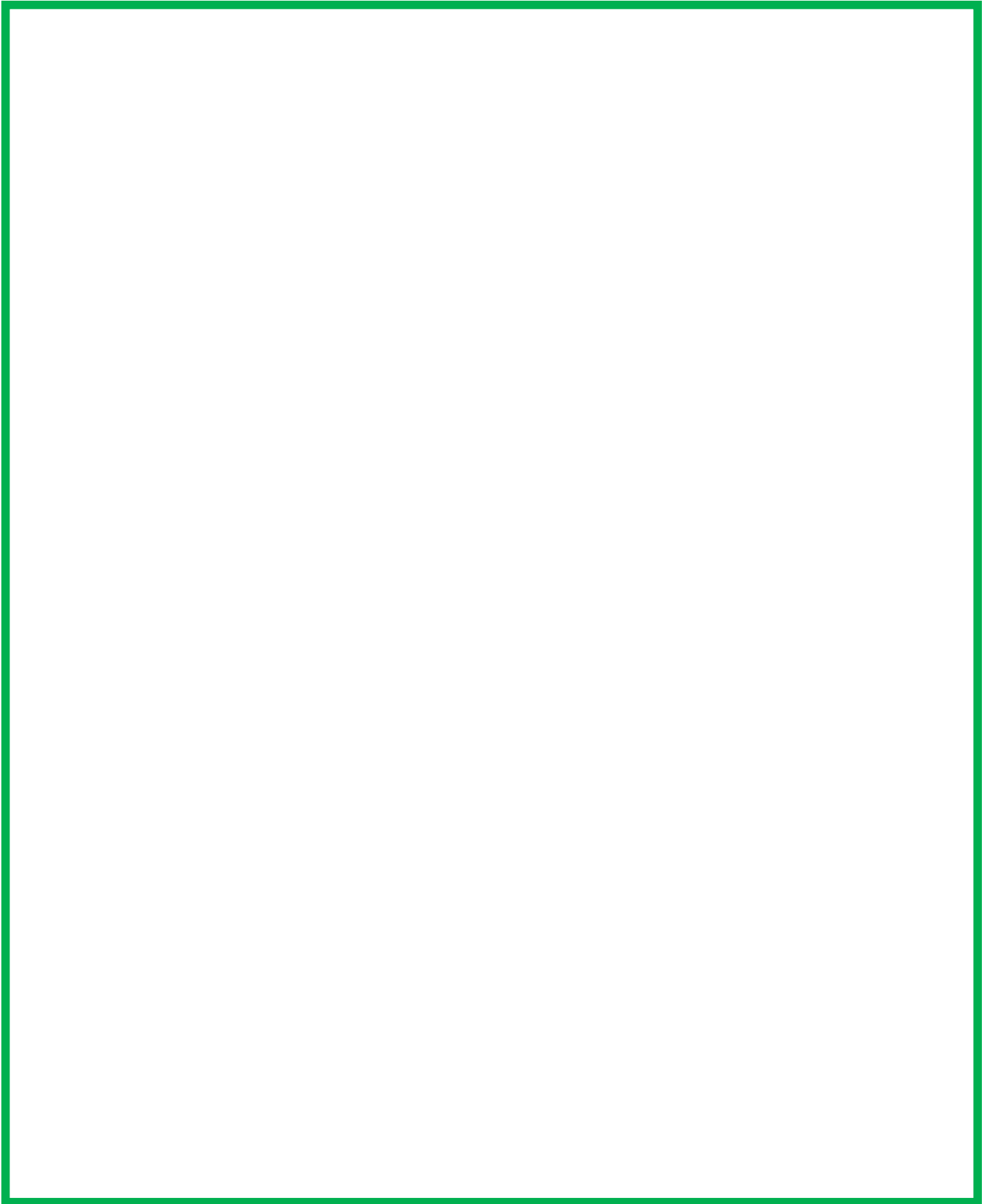
Manzanitas are another kind of berry that is most easily harvested by knocking them off the tree, into baskets or onto a blanket on the ground (Anderson, 2006).

Phoebe Maddux talks about then spreading them out in a **muruk**, a flat basket, to dry in the sun. Once dried, they were traditionally stored in a **sípnuuk**, storage basket. “The dried berries are sometimes pounded, mixed with salmon eggs, cooked in a basket with hot rock, and eaten. A drink is made by letting the berries soak in water, straining the water through a basket plate, or allowing the water to percolate through the berries. This is a ‘good’ drink” (Gifford & Schenck, 1952).

The leaves can be infused to make a tea to help a stomach flu, or used topically to treat poison oak. Ash from manzanita wood can be made into a paste and applied to heal burns (Peters, 2010).



Draw or tape pressed and dried plant specimens here:



Karuk name: _____ meaning “little berry”

Common name: **wood strawberry**

Latin name: *Fragaria vesca*

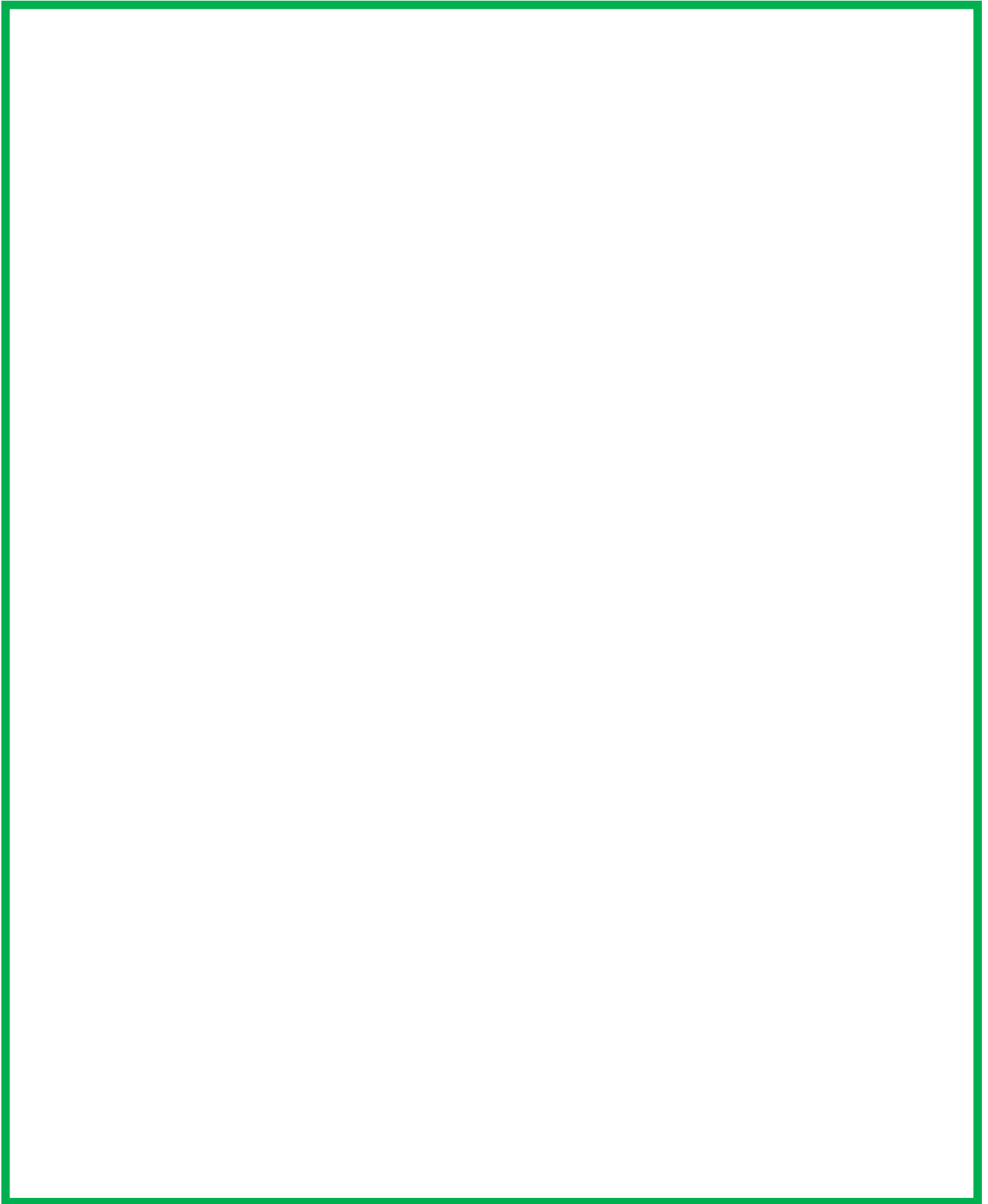
The fresh berries are enjoyed when ripe in the early summer but are not preserved since they are so tender.

Wood Strawberries are also accustomed to stewardship by fire. California Indian elder Lydia Beecher spoke of managing strawberries with fire, saying, “After they’d light the fires, the strawberries would come up better” (Anderson, 2006).

This prayer would be expressed traditionally as a prayer when you eat your first strawberries of the year: “***matêek nanímy(ah) upthaneeyáapeesh***”, meaning “My heart must lie good” (Ferrara, 2004).



Draw or tape pressed and dried plant specimens here:





Karuk name: _____

Common name: **Toyon** or **Christmas berry**

Latin name: *Heteromeles arbutifolia*

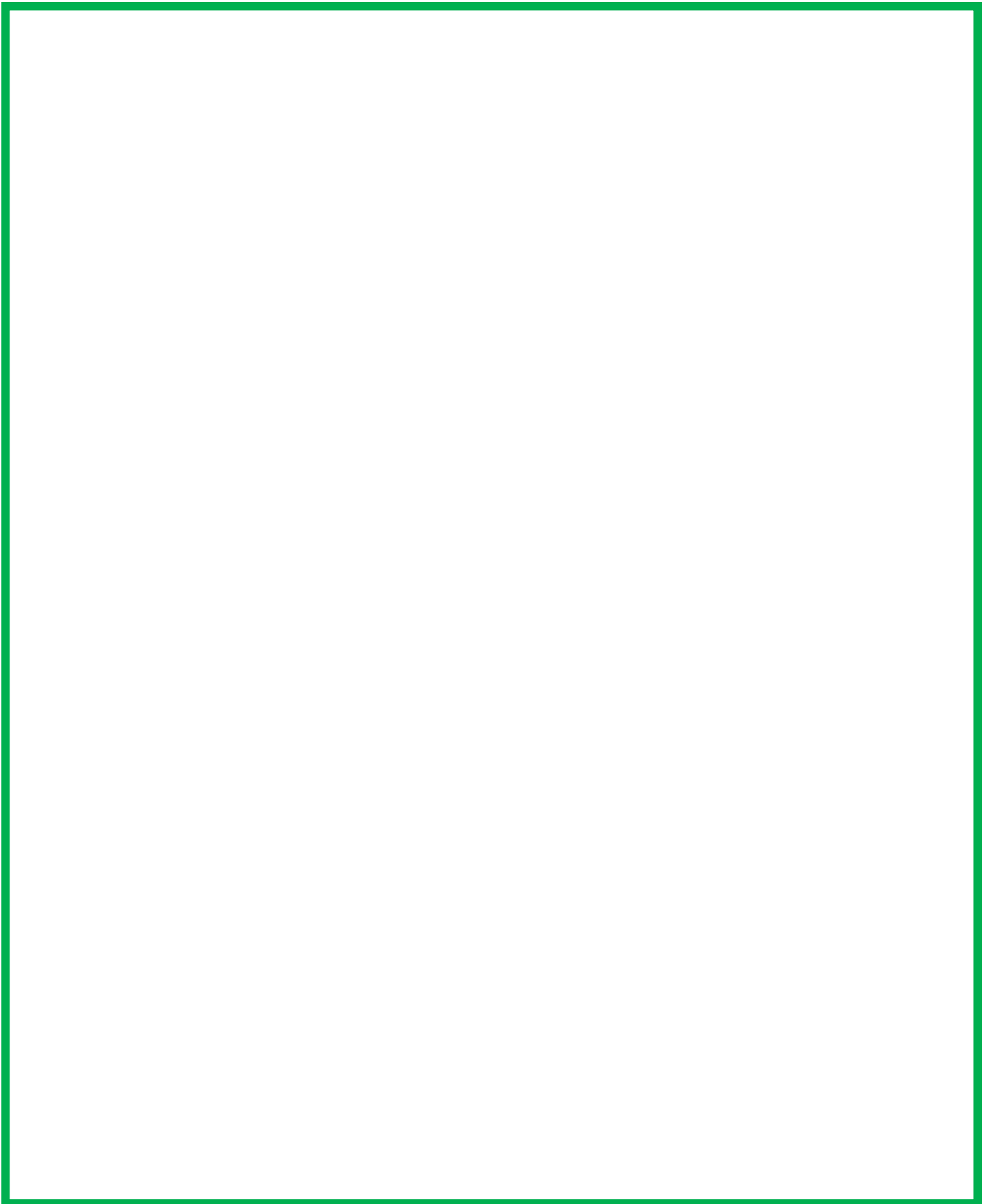
These berries are best in the winter when they have turned bright red. Traditionally they are preferred roasted or boiled.

They are said to have been “put on a basket plate in front of the fire, and turned until they are wilted, when they are eaten. They are not stored. Children throw the leaves into the fire to hear them crack” (Gifford & Schenck, 1952).

Josephine Peters describes their use simply as “childhood entertainment” saying, “Children used to roast the berries in the fall for a treat. They held a branch with berries over the fire, ‘twisting it around’ to ensure even roasting” (Peters, 2010).



Draw or tape pressed and dried plant specimens here:



Karuk name: _____ Common name: **thimble berry**

Latin name: *Rubus parviflorus*.

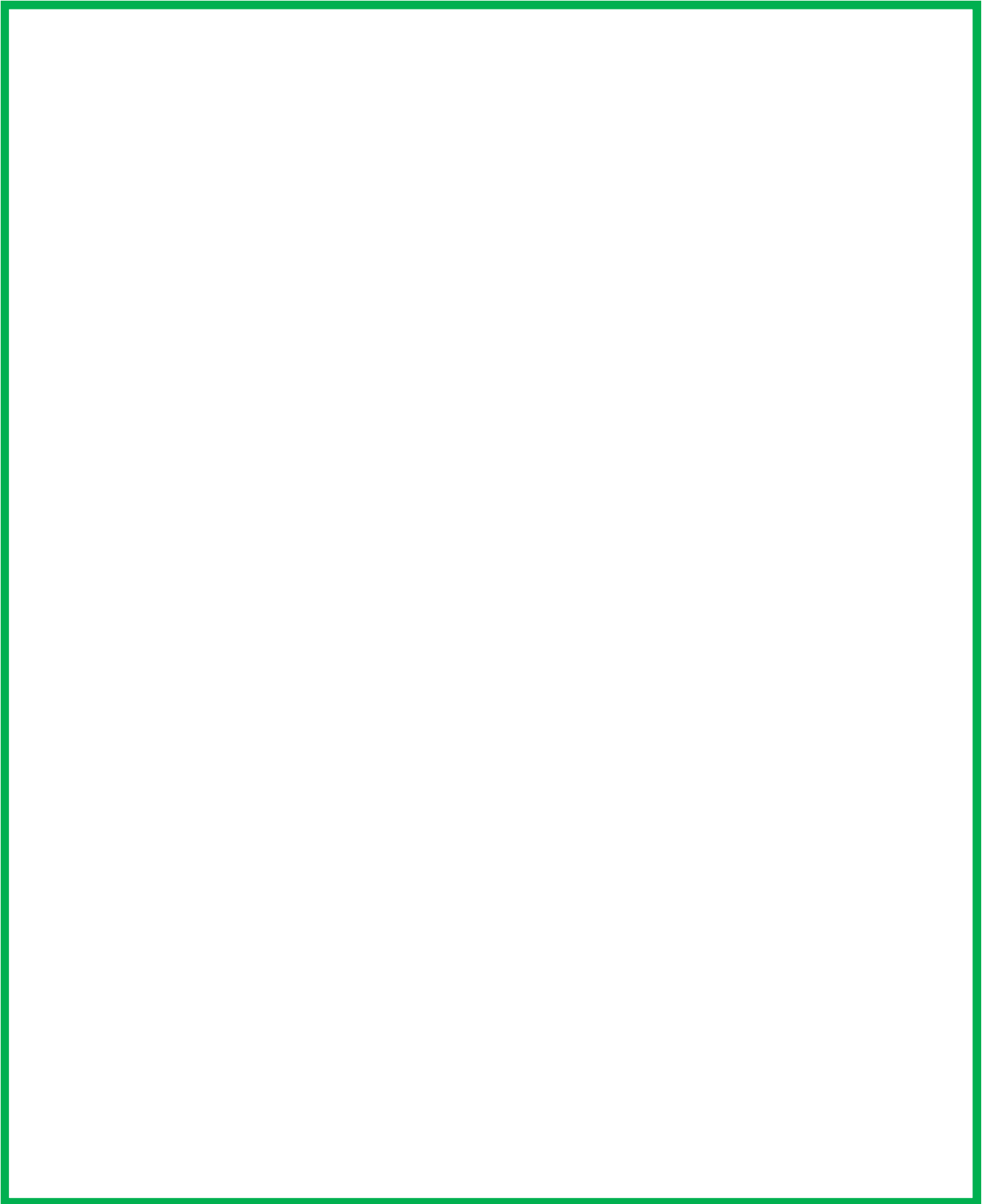
These delicious berries are eaten raw when ripe, and not typically preserved since they are so mushy (Peters, 2010).

The roots can be soaked in water, which can then be drunk as an appetizer or as a tonic for someone who is thin (Gifford & Schenck, 1952).

They grow in moist, semi-shaded locations, especially on the edge of a woodland (Jepson, 2016).



Draw or tape pressed and dried plant specimens here:



Karuk name: _____

Common name: **black cap raspberry**

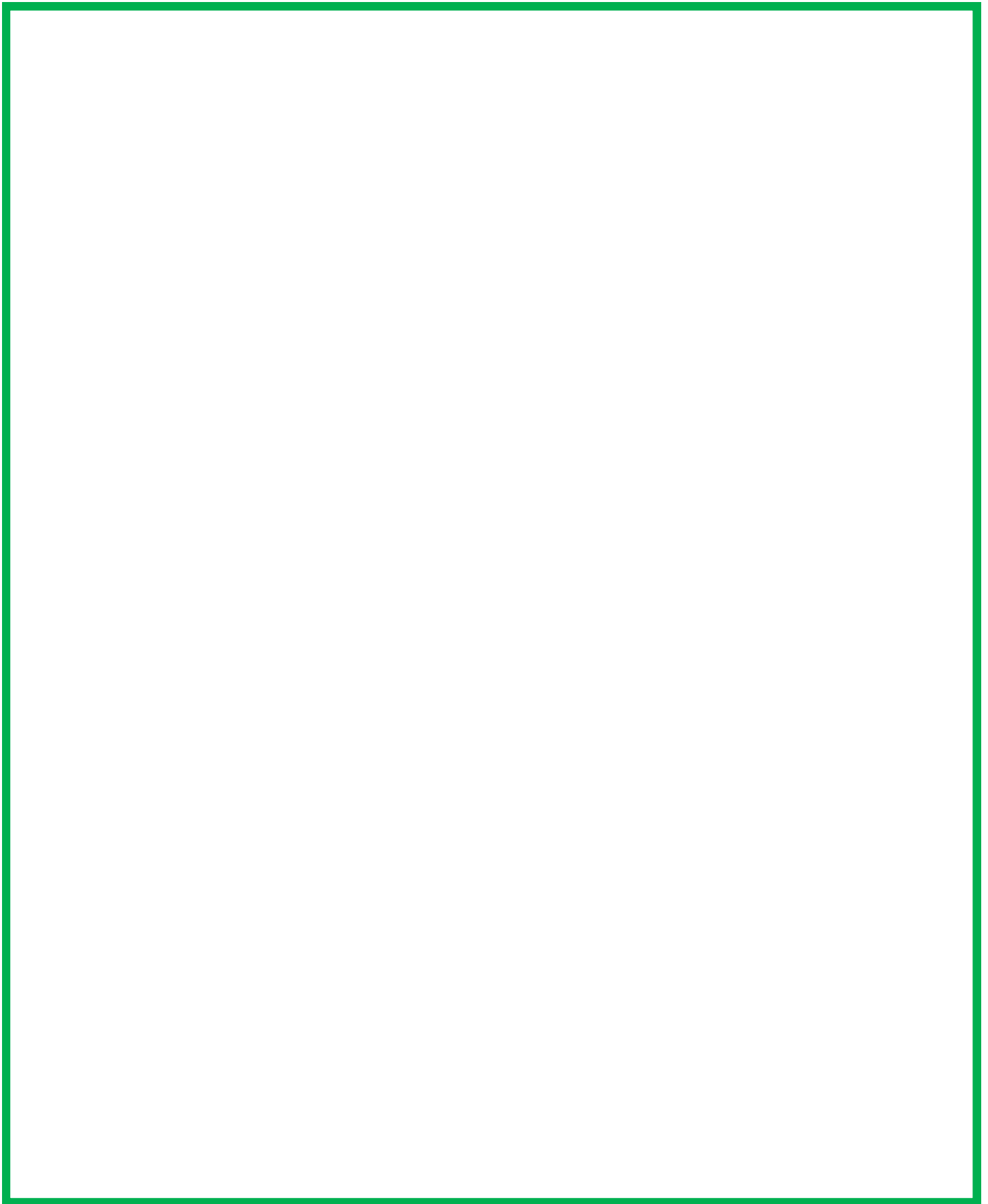
Latin name: *Rubus leucodermis*

These black raspberries have a distinctive appearance with purple canes and a prized flavor. Like other local native berries, they used to be far more abundant before fire exclusion: “Blackcaps generally come up where there’s been an old burn,” says Josephine Peters.

Later in Josephine’s life they became increasingly rare to find, but she’d find them growing in certain areas two or three years after logging... if the birds and bears didn’t get to them first! She liked to use them in jams and jellies (Peters, 2010).



Draw or tape pressed and dried plant specimens here:



Karuk Name: _____ Common Name: **wild grape**

Latin Name: *Vitis californica*

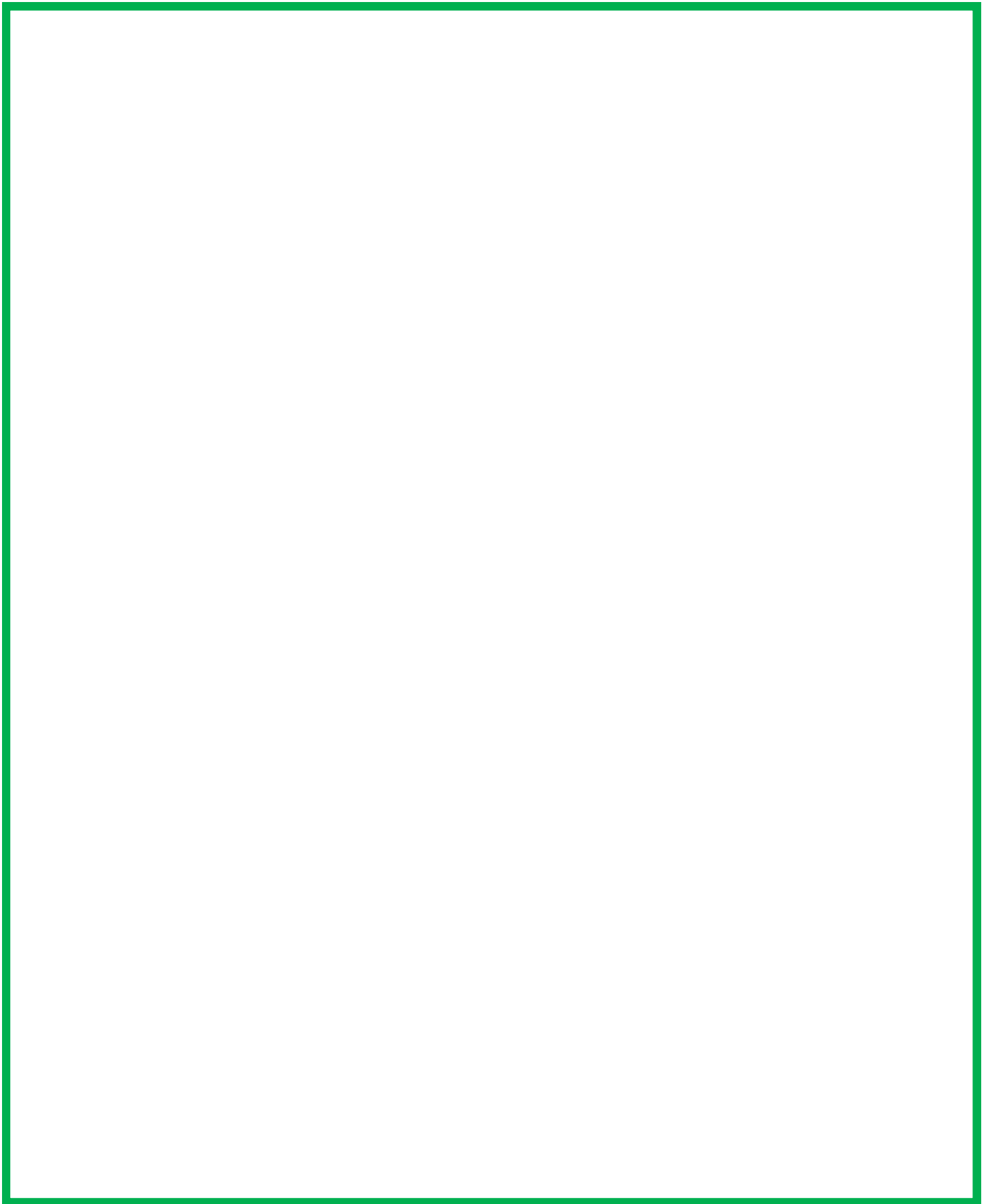
Wild grapes are extremely drought tolerant once established, growing great lengths in a year without summer rainfall. They are gathered and eaten when ripe, during the late fall. They can be juiced using a domestic grape press or steam juicer to make a dark, rich, delicious drink, rich in antioxidants, vitamins, and minerals (Anderson, 2006).

Josephine Peters purports the sap to prevent hair loss, saying one can cut the grape stem in the spring and let it drip into a jar and massage this liquid into the scalp (Peters, 2010).

Traditionally, the roots exposed after the high water are good material for baskets, according to Mamie Offield and Georgia Orcutt. Georgia Orcutt has also said that the leaves can be used to cover bulbs when cooking bulbs in the earth oven (Gifford & Schenck, 1952).



Draw or tape pressed and dried plant specimens here:



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We hope you've enjoyed this booklet, and would like you to know that the goal of the Karuk Tribe's Cultural Information Policy is to "restore Karuk People as the rightful authorities over our cultural materials and traditional knowledge. (...)

For more information about the Karuk Tribe's Cultural Information Policy, please see our website at **www.karuk.us**. **Yôotva!**



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