



araratáyiith: Indian potatoes

some traditional edible bulbs and corms



Plant Identification Resources:

- USDA Plants Data Base: plants.usda.gov/java/
- Calflora: calflora.org
- Wildflowers of the Pacific Northwest: nwflowers.com
- Jepson Herbarium: plants.stor.org/partner/JEPS
- California Native Plant Society: cnps.org

Karuk Ethnobotanical Resources:

- *Karok Ethnobotany*, Schenk and Gifford
- *Plants and the People: the Ethnobotany of the Karuk Tribe*, Barbara J. Davis
- “Scientific Designation for Plants, with Corresponding Karuk Names”, Jim Ferrara
- “Plant and Animal Names Composite List with English Glosses of Karuk Terms”, Fritz Hansen, Phoebe Maddux, JP Harrington, Jim Ferrara

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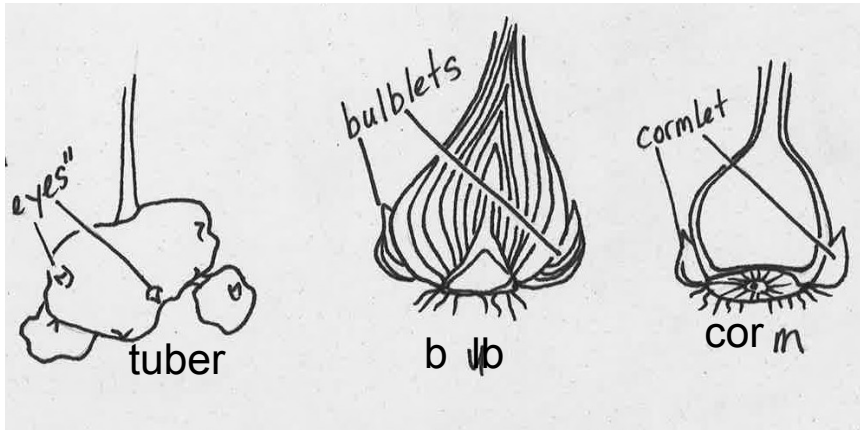
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Indian Potatoes... are not really “Potatoes”

Differences between tubers, bulbs, and corms:



tuber—underground stem with numerous buds or eyes, e.g. common potato

bulb—underground stem with layers of fleshy modified leaves, e.g. soaproot

corm—enlarged base of a stem with solid center, e.g. harvest brodiaea
(Tending the Wild)

putiruh is the adapted Karuk word for the common potato. An ancient traditional food of the people of the Andes Mountains in South America, the potato was valued for its nutritional value and high productivity. People have since taken these, and transplanted them all over the world.



poor'êep (fiber)



tásirar - brush for brushing dry **xúun** from cooking and eating baskets. **poor'êep** used as brush hairs, cooked bulb used to glue fibers together to make solid handle.

imyúha: soaproot



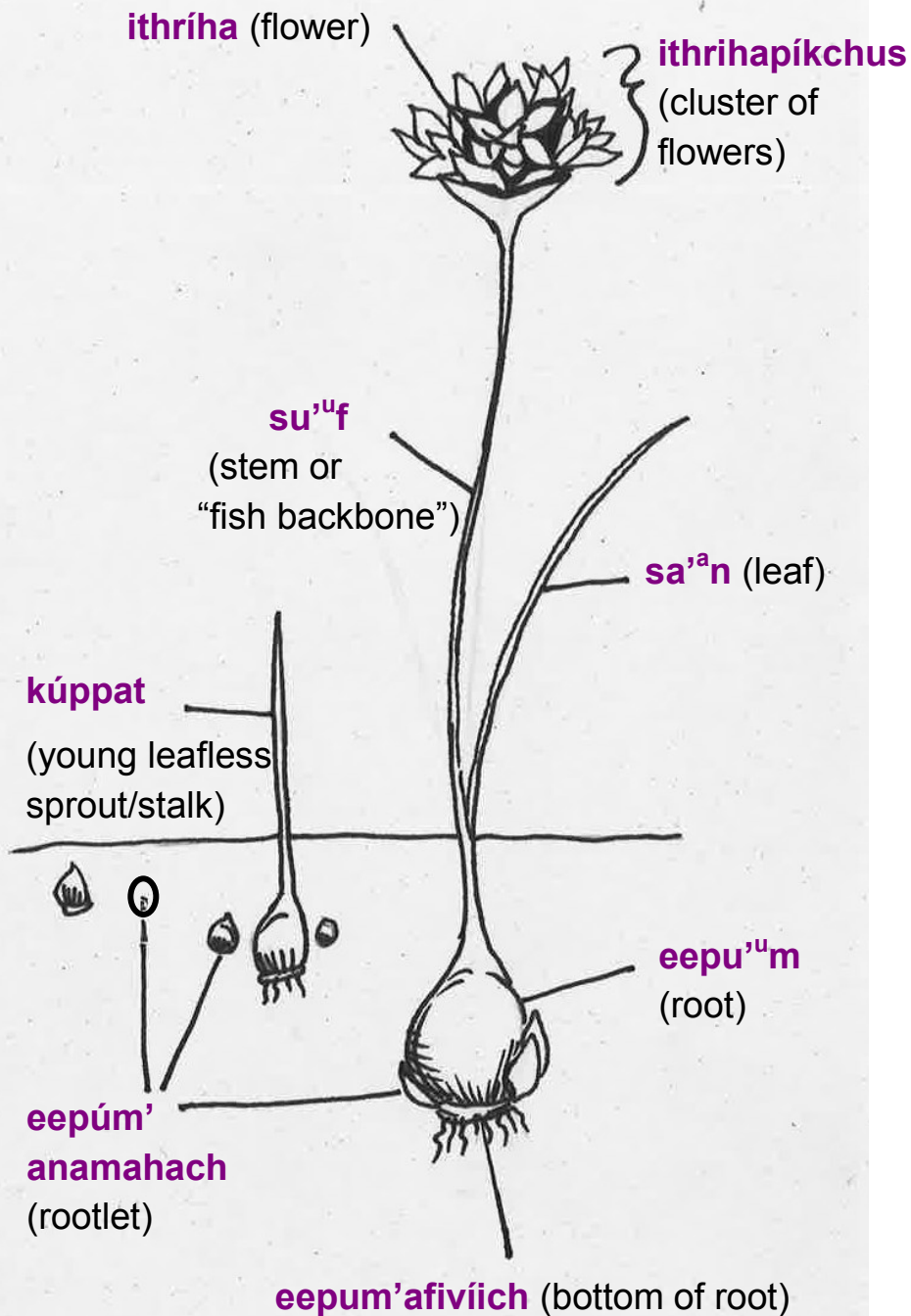
Karuk name: imyúha
Common name: soaproot, soapplant
Scientific name: *Chlorogalum pomeridianum*
Uses: Bulbs eaten when cooked, used as soap, glue, remedy for poison oak, and fibers used to make brushes.
Found in woodland, grassland, chaparral, or open meadow habitat at elevations close to the river

Georgia Orcutt, who was a Karuk Elder and speaker, described the way to cook Indian potatoes: “A pit is dug and lined with stones. A fire is built in it, and as soon as the fire burns out, the ashes are removed. Poison oak leaves, huckleberry leaves, and grape leaves are placed on the hot stones and the bulbs are laid on them, then more of the same leaves, then more bulbs and more leaves. Over this are spread sand and ashes, and a fire is built on top. Next morning the bulbs are taken out, and they ‘smell good.’” (Karok Ethnobotany)



Soaproot cross-section

pa'íppa mupkutunváramuu:



never eat something
you're not sure of!



Common name: false asphodel, tofieldia

Scientific name: *Triantha occidentalis*

Don't eat! Poisonous!

More commonly in Karuk homeland -
found in wet meadows in the high country

“[Knowing the difference between True Camas and Death Camas] ... was a difficult feat even for the first Californians... These natives knew the features of the plants they sought as well as they knew the phases of the moon, and still, when it came to distinguishing the true Camas from Death Camas, once in a while they made a fatal mistake.”

from *CA Herbal Remedies*

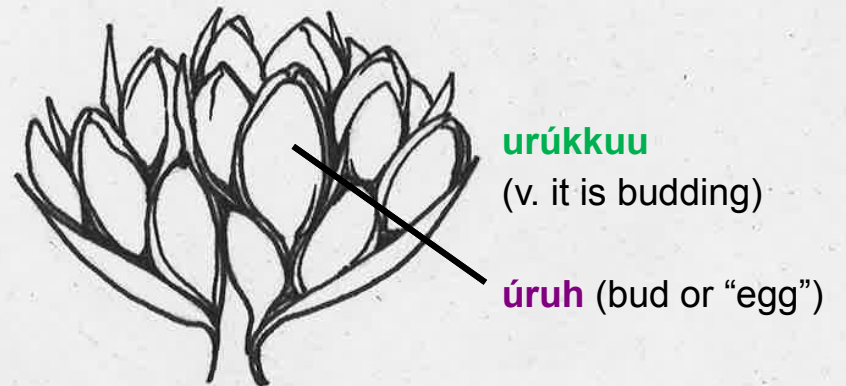
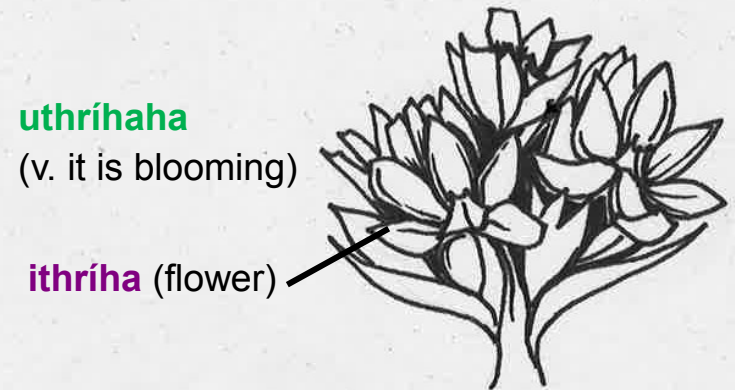
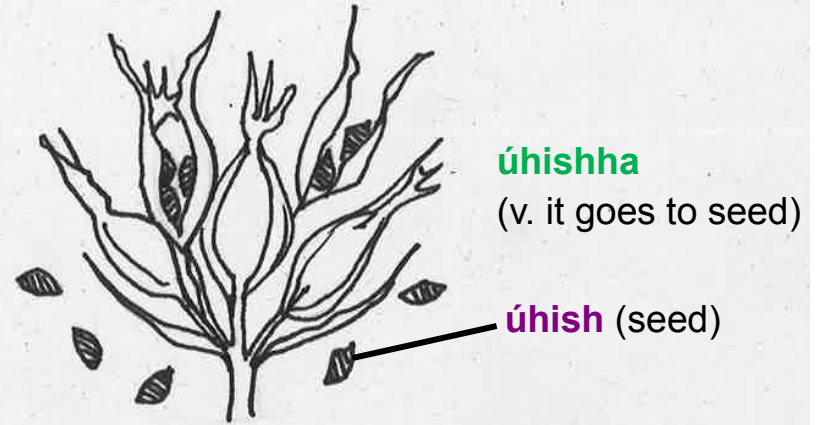
Poisonous look-alikes:



Karuk name: áfki'ch
Common name: Death Camas
Don't eat! Poisonous!
Not commonly found within traditional Karuk homeland

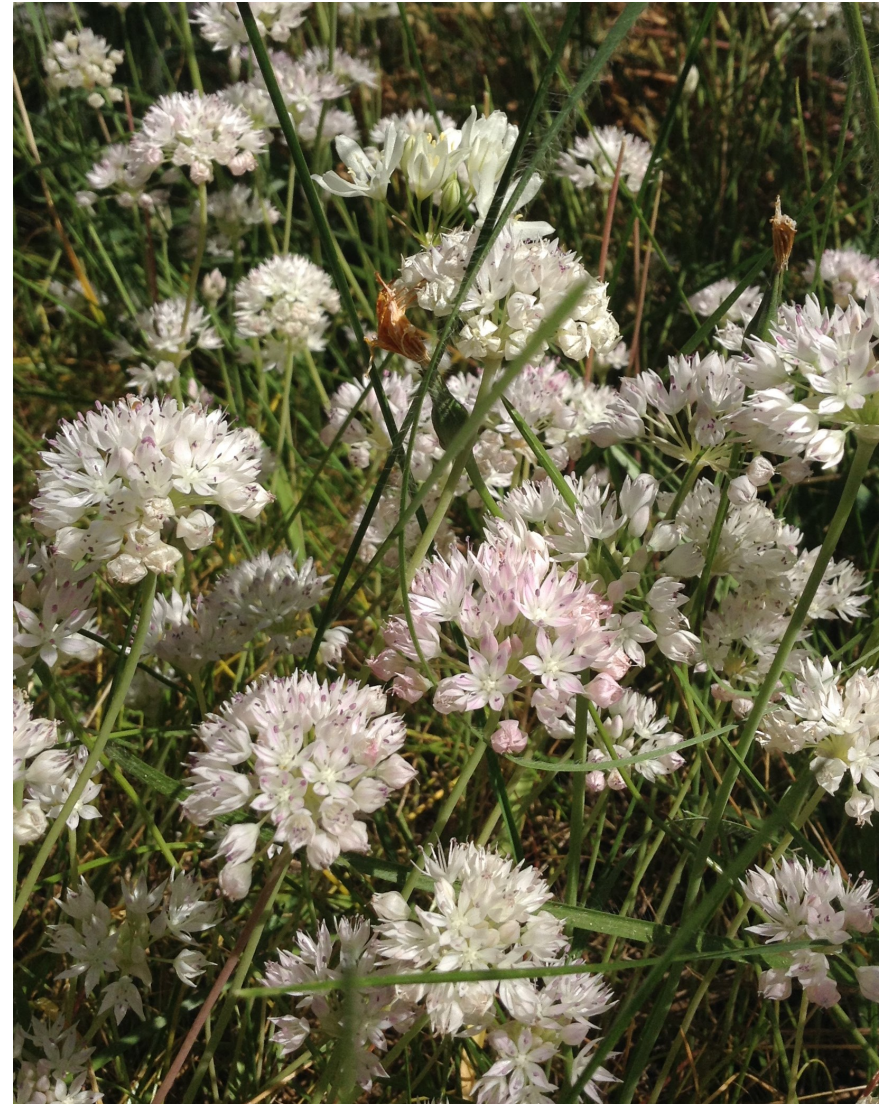
Compare to True Camas

plants' parts



How can you improve Indian potato production when you're harvesting them at the same time?

- ◆ Have patience and good thoughts
- ◆ Use digging tool to loosen soil around the *sides* of the plant so you don't injure root
- ◆ Pull unwanted and/ or "weeds" away
- ◆ Plant back bulblets, cormlets, root crowns, and seeds if possible
- ◆ Fill in holes you dig
- ◆ Practice cultural broadcast burning in the early



Karuk name: xannáchyuh "a-little-long-downriverward"
Common name: wild onion, wild garlic
Scientific name: *Allium amplexans*
Uses: bulb used as food and as seasoning
Found in open, wooded, sometimes wet meadows at elevations closer to the river

Bulbs:



root crown left behind to re-grow

“I’ve heard if you dig them, they get bigger.”

Bill Tripp, Karuk

Cormlets planted



Seeds planted back in same and new places

Karuk name: pufichxannáchyuh “deer-a-little-downriverward”

Common name: wild onion

Scientific name: *Allium bolanderi*

Uses: bulb used as food and as seasoning

Uncommon but found in certain rocky clay or serpentine areas in the high country



ahíshriva: to light a fire

“vaa mít vúra kích kunkupítihat pakun'ahisriihvutihat
paperíshriik yíthakuneek, yakúnva uum yêepsha
u'íifti pakookfâachas...

“All they used to do was to
burn the brush at various
places, so good things would
grow up.”

Phoebe Maddux, Karuk

Jeanerette Jacups-Johnny on traditional harvest of edible roots
(based on teachings from her grandmother, Mary Charles John-
ny):

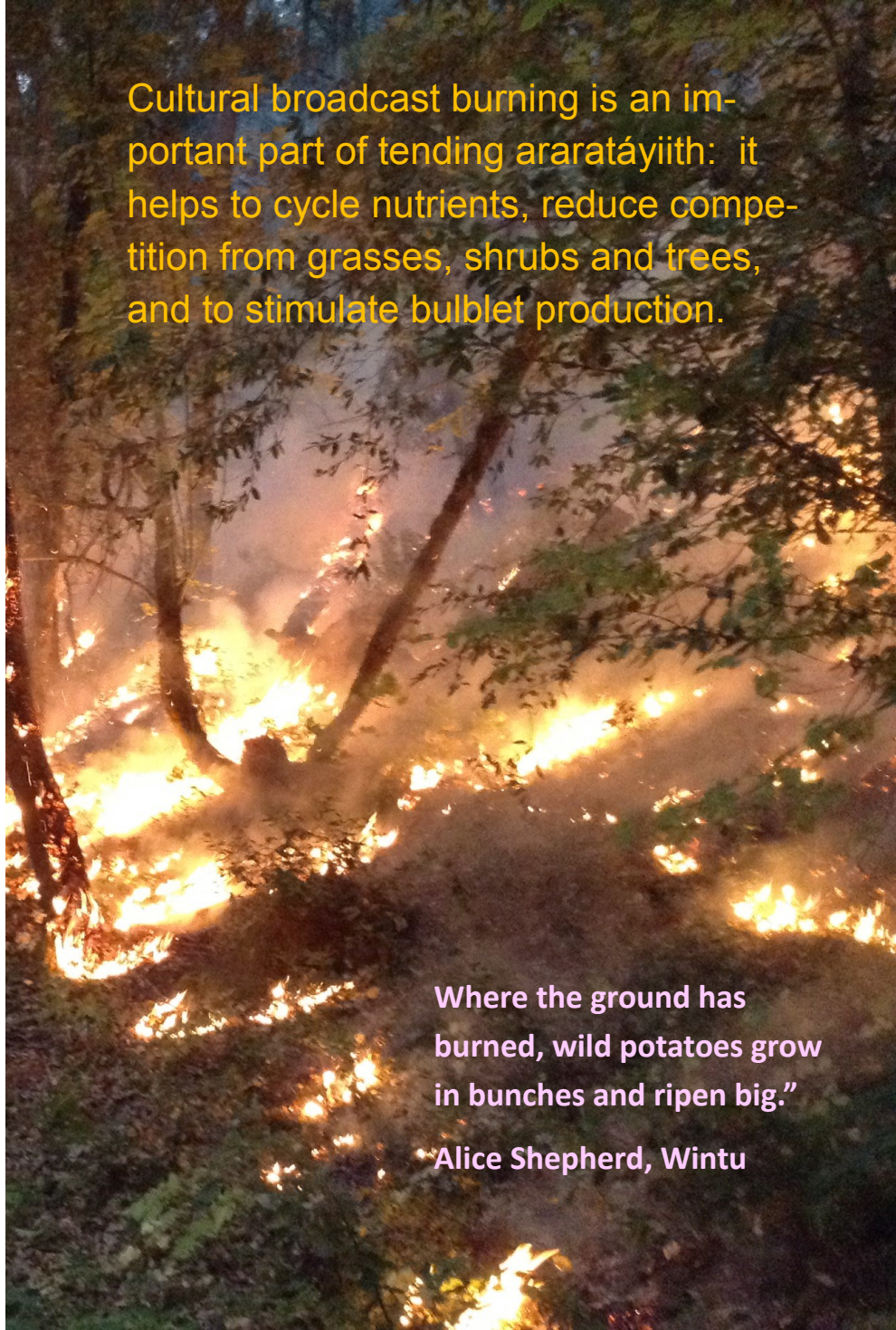
“We have to be *quiet* when we go out there so that the
spirits aren't thinking, 'look at those noisy people there'.
Really listen, don't be louder than the sound of the river,
the wind through the pine needles.

“Going out harvesting a silent chore, a work of art, of
love rather than a work of labor. You can't have bad
thoughts... stay home if you're in a bad frame of mind.”





Karuk name: ixyunihatáyiith “throwing-down-many-ones”
Common name: firecracker
Scientific name: *Brodiaea ida-mia*
Uses: Corm dug and eaten cooked or raw
Found along forest edges, in grasslands, and other disturbed and open areas ranging from elevations at the river and higher upslope



Cultural broadcast burning is an important part of tending araratáyiith: it helps to cycle nutrients, reduce competition from grasses, shrubs and trees, and to stimulate bulblet production.

Where the ground has burned, wild potatoes grow in bunches and ripen big.”

Alice Shepherd, Wintu

Corms:



Karuk name: tayi^hth “many-ones”

Common name: Blue Dicks, Indian potato

Scientific name: *Dichelostemma* sp.

Uses: Corm dug and eaten cooked or raw

Found in woodland, grassland, chaparral, or open meadow habitat at elevations close to the river



Karuk name: pufichtáyiith “deer-many-ones”

Common names: deer potato, Harvest brodiaea,
elegant brodiaea

Scientific name: *Brodiaea elegans*

Uses: Corm dug and eaten cooked or raw

Found in woodland, grassland, chaparral, or open meadow habitat at elevations close to the river