

WSF Wildflower Guide Chilcotin Mountains: Common Plants, Trees & Shrubs



Wolf lichen

Letharia vulpina

Bright yellow-green lichen on conifer trees. Used by natives as a dye for clothing and wood, and as a body paint. Contains poisonous vulpinic acid hence the Latin name 'Letharia' (lethal).



Edible horsehair

Bryoria fremontii

Hangs from conifer trees like hair. Used as a staple food by natives, who washed it and pit-cooked it with wild onions, roots and bulbs, and dried it in cakes for storage. They boiled the cakes before eating them.



Common witch's hair

Alectoria sarmentosa

Hangs from conifer trees, like edible horsehair but light green.



Indian hellebore

Veratrum viride

Highly poisonous to humans and livestock. Even drinking water where it grows causes stomach cramps, frothing at the mouth, lock-jaw, blurred vision, vomiting and diarrhea. Specialist natives used it to treat advanced serious illnesses i.e. cancer.



Horsetail

Equisetum

Non-flowering, brush-like plant in wet places. Rough to the touch and used by native people as sandpaper for polishing. Also boiled and used for treating kidney problems, poison ivy rashes and sores.



Soopolallie / Bearberry

Shepherdia canadensis

Very common shrub. The berries contain saponin which produces a soapy foam when whipped. Natives used this to produce a dessert called 'Indian ice-cream'. Also widely used medicinally.



Trembling aspen

Populus tremuloides

Common tree with smooth grey-white bark. Grows from root suckers and can form huge clones of trees thousands of years old and covering several hectares.



Pasture sage

Artemisia frigida

Common pine with long needles in bundles of two. The cones are sealed shut and only open after fire so it quickly re-grows after fires, which also removes the older trees that are susceptible to mountain pine beetle attacks.



Douglas fir

Pseudotsuga menziesii

The dominant conifer in the area. The cones have pointed bracts extending from the scales. The seeds are important food for wildlife. The timber is valuable for construction.



Common juniper

Juniperus communis

Common low-growing shrub with bluish 'berries' that are actually cones covered in flesh. Natives used it as a deodorizer and cleanser but did not often eat the berries.