Wild Plant Walk with Feather Jones, RH, AHG

Our focus will be on native plants of the Rocky Mountains. Snow Mountain Ranch is around 8,800' elevation on the western slope of the Colorado rockies and the main tree communities are aspen, pine, spruce and fir. Many plants that grow in upper montane below subapline share the same or relative genus as those growing at lower elevations. Species change over from one to another at various elevations. They occasionally hybridize at transition zones, making it hard to identify species.

For example, Uva Ursi, *Arctostaphylos uva ursi*, sometimes called Kinnikinnik or Bearberry, grows in the Colorado foothills up to 9,000' and is replaced with Myrtle Blueberry or Bilberry, *Vaccinum myrtillus or related species*, which is common in upper montane to subalpine forests found under spruces. Our Vaccinum species do indeed get delicious tasting blueberries, small but packed with flavor. Creeping Wintergreen, *Gaultheria humifusa* is found in cold mossy subapline forests. Though they all have different therapeutic actions, all Ericaceae family plants have the ability to prevent bacterial adherence on urinary mucous membranes, helping to prevent UTIs. They all contain tannins, arbutins and flavonoids. Some more, some less astringent. All reacidify the urinary tract to further prevent infections.

Another example is Betony or Lousewort, *Pedicularis grayi* that grows up to about 9,000' and switches over to Elephant Head Betony, *Pedicularis groenlandica*, that grows up to treeline. They are partial root parasites and share characteristics with whatever plants/trees grow near. A mindful harvester will take that into account. However they do not act like Mistletoe that robs it's host of life energy from an unhealthy tree/shrub, but rather initially gathers nutritents without negatively effecting close-by roots that then produce host free seedlings. A good wildcrafter will leave parent plants and focus on younger plants to harvest. Pedicularis likes a healthy biosphere and is a good indication of species abundance and will diminish with loss of plant diversity. It's main action due to the various glycosides and plant acids are unique. A very effective skeletal/striated muscle relaxant. As a first aid herb that goes in the back pack, the fresh extract will reduce achy muscles and muscle spasms quickly due to over use, such as various minor injuries that involve muscluar tension and strain.

Below is a partial list of what we may see in October.

Apache plume	Fallugia paeadoxa
Arnica	Arnica latifolia/cordifolia
Aspen	Populus tremuloides
Bilberry	Vaccinum myrtillus
Bistort	Polygonum bistortoides
Blue Bells	Mertensia spp.
Blue Spruce	Picea engelmannii
Bush cinquifoil Potentilla spp.	
Columbine	Aquilegia caerulea
Corydalis	Corydalis aurea
Desert Parsley	Lomatium dissectum
False Hellebore Veratrum tenuipetalum	
Fringed Gentian	n Gentianopsis thermalis
Golden rod	Solidago spathulata
Green Gentian Frasera speciosa	
Horsetail	Equisetum arvense
Penstemon	Penstemon whippleanus
Pineapple weed Chamomilla suaveolens	
Pussytoes	Antennaria spp.
Sagebrush	Artemesia tridentada
Strawberry	<i>Fragaria</i> spp.
Sulphur flower Erigonum umbellatum	
Uva Ursi	Arctostaphylus uva ursi
Water Hemlock Cicuta douglasii	
Yarrow	Achillea lanulosa

Many of our native plants require tender handling and thoughtful harvesting practices. Plants like Osha', *Ligusticum porteri*, which are indigenous to the rockies, change species as they grow outside the bioregion. The

Angelicas, *Angelica ampla and related species* follow a similar pattern. These plants are 'specific use' plants and used traditionally for their value in deep healing of disease states. Naturalized plants like Alfalfa and Dandelion that frequent the high country in Colorado are in abundance. They are found in every bioregion and are used for daily health maintanence. Life is good and this makes sense.

Every bioregion has it's own natives for acute ailments. When a plant is researched, it becomes popular and everyone wants to use it, regardless of where it grows. Most of the research these days is aimed at potential marketing of a new product. This can put a strain on the plant populations particularly if they don't grow well in cultivation. This is not to say we shouldn't use these herbs, we have generations of knowledge on appropriate usage of the right plant for the right person. We might want to focus on what's in our own backyard first, then reach out. If we know the intrinsic value and personalities of the native plants, we know what we can substitute locally according to the individual needing them. This is a reasonable and old school approach.

Our walk will take us to an aspen/meadow/creek convergence. Come join us!