

Know Your Flora

A Guide to the Most
Widespread Trees,
Shrubs, Flowers and
Grasses in the
Truckee Meadows and
Surrounding Hillsides



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Greenleaf manzanita

Arctostaphylos patula

Family: Ericaceae

perennial; native; shrub found above valley floor in pine forest; height to 4 or more feet; smooth, reddish-brown bark; tough wood; round, green leaves with points; white-pink flowers in spring



Rubber rabbitbrush

Ericameria nauseosa

Family: Asteraceae

perennial; native; profuse yellow flowers in late summer to fall, light gray stems; quickly colonizes disturbed soil



Big sagebrush

Artemisia tridentata

Family: Asteraceae

most common plant in West; aromatic, leaves split into three parts at tip; multitude of seeds in late summer and fall; can grow to about 5 feet high

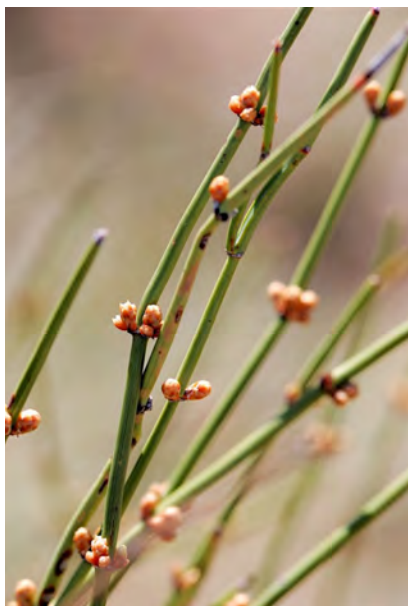


Green ephedra

Ephedra viridis

Family: Asteraceae

perennial; native; very green all seasons;
long, linear, jointed, broom-like stems; leaves
are tiny scales at joints; often called “Mormon
tea”



Desert peach

Prunus andersonii

Family: Asteraceae

perennial; native; shrub bearing
fragrant pink blossoms in early spring;
height to 4 feet; thorny with light gray
smooth bark



Bitterbrush

Purshia tridentata

Family: Rosaceae

perennial; native; large shrub to 6 feet or more height; small green leaves split in three at tips; ivory to yellow smallish flower in spring



Wild rose

Rosa woodsii

Family: Rosaceae

perennial; native; found near water sources; green oval leaves with points; thorny stems; pink blossoms and red fruit (“hips”)



Fourwing saltbush

Atriplex canescens

Family: Chenopodiaceae

perennial; native; shrub preferring alkaline and sandy soils; grayish bark and grayish-green leaves; four-sided seedpod; often mistaken for rabbitbrush; separate male & female plants



Blue elderberry

Sambucas nigra

Family: Adoxaceae

perennial; native; shrubs found on uplands; height to 10 feet; leafy foliage with clusters of small white flowers and blue to purple fruit in summer



Western chokecherry

Prunus virginiana

Family: Rosaceae

perennial; native; shrub found near water sources; height to 8 or more feet; smooth, dark gray bark; bright green leaves; long clusters of white to pinkish flowers lead to red cherry-like bitter fruit



Fremont cottonwood

Populus fremontii

Family: Salicaceae

perennial; native; large tree found in or near riparian areas; furrowed bark on mature trees; heart-shaped, serrated-edge leaves; cotton-like seeds in spring



Willow

Salix spp.

Family: Salicaceae

perennial; native; many subspecies ranging from shrubs to trees; always in riparian areas; generally elongated leaves; smooth bark



Quaking aspen

Populus tremuloides

Family: Salicaceae

perennial; native; deciduous tree found in uplands and mountains; grows in stands; white smooth bark; oval leaves



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Ponderosa pine

Pinus ponderosa

Family: Pinaceae

three needles bunched together;
similar to Jeffrey Pine; when rolled
between hands, the Ponderosa cones
are prickly and Jeffrey ones are not;
Jeffrey pine more common in foothills



Cheatgrass

Bromus tectorum

Family: Poaceae

annual; non-native; invasive grass that greens in late winter, drops seeds in summer, and then fades to light brown; will cover large swaths of land, filling out between native plants



Basin wildrye

Leymus cinereus

Family: Poaceae

perennial; native; bunchgrass growing to 6 feet; long leaf blades on round stems; seed heads are 5-10 inches long; found mostly in dry sagebrush habitat



Indian paintbrush

Castilleja spp.

Family: Orobanchaceae

perennial; native; spikelike bracts (not flower) clusters, which make the plant look like a brush dipped in paint; colors vary from white through yellow, pink, and red; up to 15 inches high



Lupine

Lupinus spp.

Family: Fabaceae

perennial; native; many species; mostly purple flowers, ranging to white and reddish; leaves in whorl pattern; height to 5-6 feet in wet areas; very low (inches) plant in dry upland areas



Mule's ear

Wyethia mollis

Family: Asteraceae

perennial; native; large, soft, hairy, elongated, oval leaves; bright yellow flowers in summer; covers hillsides in sagebrush areas; often confused with arrowleaf balsamroot



Arrowleaf balsamroot

Balsamorhiza sagittata

Family: Asteraceae

perennial; native; large arrow-shaped leaves; bright yellow flowers in late spring to summer; many plants together will cover large spaces



Phlox

Phlox spp.

Family: Polemoniaceae

perennial; native; several species in area; early spring flowers grow on short stems in bunches; height to about 8 inches; flowers are white-pink-lavender-purple; prickly leaves



Tall whitetop

Lepidium latifolium

Family: Brassicaceae

perennial; invasive; called “tall whitetop” or “perennial pepperweed”; white flowers atop 3-5 foot stems; spreads by roots and seeds and often seen in large swaths



Common mustard

Brassica rapa

Family: Brassicaceae

annual; invasive; bushy plant with many branches; height to 5 feet; flowers are yellow in four petals; very distinctive skeleton when dry



Desert buckwheat

Eriogonum spp.

Family: Polygonaceae

perennial; native; several species; not actually “buckwheat”; spring to summer flowers grow on long stems in bunches; height to 12 inches; flowers are white to yellow in clumps



This guide was produced by the Great Basin Group of the Sierra Club.

“We get you outdoors.”

<http://www.sierraclub.org/toiyabe/great-basin>

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Why this pamphlet?

Knowing one's "place" begins with visual recognition and familiarity with the things we see outdoors. So, the Great Basin Group of the Sierra Club composed this pamphlet as a guide to our area's most commonly seen trees, shrubs, flowers, and grasses. This is deliberately kept to a short list to acquaint you with the flora you are likely to see in hiking and walking around the Truckee Meadows and its adjacent hillsides. It is easy to stow in a pack or even a pocket as you explore the area. We hope it gives you a feeling of knowing your "place" and an ability to teach others about it. "We Get You Outdoors" is our motto, and we believe that part of that experience should be to learn about what is in that space.

For more information on the Great Basin Group, Sierra Club, visit

<http://www.sierraclub.org/toiyabe/great-basin>

"Explore, enjoy, and protect the planet"



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