

NATIVE PLANTS ASSOCIATED WITH SUDDEN OAK DEATH (SOD) AND THEIR USE BY CALIFORNIA INDIANS – FACT SHEET No. 41

The plant disease caused by a fungus-like microorganism, *Phytophthora ramorum*, is referred to as “Sudden Oak Death” because of its association with premature death in tanoak trees. This disease occurs in some California wildlands and affects several native California plants, including Oregon Grape. Susceptible plants can become infected through exposure to water-borne infective agents via rainfall, splash or drainage. In addition to natural spread of the disease, it can also be transmitted by human transport of infected plants and their parts to susceptible new plants in the environment. Good cultural practices and restrictions on the movement of infected material can minimize the risk of spreading the disease. For more information, please refer to website links for the U.S. Department Of Agriculture / Plant Protection And Quarantine (www.aphis.usda.gov/ppq/ispm/pramorom/), the California Department of Food And Agriculture (www.cdfa.ca.gov), the California Oak Mortality Task Force (<http://nature.berkeley.edu/comtf>), or contact your local County Department of Agriculture.

Common Name: Oregon Grape, Hollyleaved Barberry

Scientific Name: *Mahonia aquifolium*



Photos courtesy of Virginia Tech Dendrology Department

Past and possibly present tribal uses.

Karuk: The plant was considered poisonous, and the berries, if eaten caused diarrhea, but the leaves and roots were used as a steam bath for “yellow fever”. A decoction of roots was taken as a good medicine for all kinds of sickness. The fruit was mixed with salmon glue and pounded larkspur flowers and used to paint arrows and bows.

Wintoon: A species of *Mahonia*, possibly this one, was used to make to make a yellow dye.

Yurok: The root was used to dye porcupine quills yellow.