

NATIVE PLANTS ASSOCIATED WITH SUDDEN OAK DEATH (SOD) AND THEIR USE BY CALIFORNIA INDIANS – FACT SHEET No. 26

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 Northern California wildlands and affects several native California plants, including Pacific Yew. 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/pramorur/), the California Department Of Food And Agriculture (www.cdffa.ca.gov), the California Oak Mortality Task Force (<http://nature.berkeley.edu/comtf>), or contact your local County Department Of Agriculture.

Common Name: Pacific Yew

Scientific Name: Taxus brevifolia



Photo courtesy of Virginia Tech Forestry Dept.

Cahto Name:	gaash, gash
Concow Maidu:	yōl' kō
Kashaya Pomo Name:	?ihq ^h o? (yew root) ?ihq ^h o? q ^h ale (root tree) q ^h awá?ni q ^h ale (digging stick tree)
Yurok Name:	sool

Past and possibly present tribal uses.

Costanoan: Wood was used to make bows.

Karuk: Berries were eaten one at a time. Wood was used to make various tools, bows and tobacco pipes.

Bark was used as a covering for stone knives. A decoction of bark was used as a “blood medicine” and a decoction of twig bark was taken for stomachaches. Needles were used to sew sacks.

Mendocino Indians: The seeds were considered poisonous but the red, fleshy berries were eaten. Wood was used to make strong bows.

Paiute: Wood was used to make bows.

(see back)

Pit River Indians: Wood or bows were sold to Ukiah Indians.

Pomo: Wood was used for bows, mush stirrers and digging sticks. Roots were used as the weft in twined baskets and they were also twined as a fabric.

Shasta: Wood was used to make bows.

Tolowa: Wood was used to make bows and tobacco pipes.

Yurok: A decoction of bark was taken to “purify the blood”.