

Farewell to Summer...

I lean and loaf at my ease observing a spear of summer grass.
(Walt Whitman)

Yet another summer loath to go
Although the scythes hang in the apple trees. (Louise Bogan)

Summers lease hath all too short a date. (Wm. Shakespeare)



One consolation to the loss of summer is **Vitis Californica... California Wild Grape**. Historically, the wild grape was probably much more prevalent in the Laguna than it is now, as it loves riparian areas. However, it is easy to find in the Sebastopol Wetlands Preserve. The Preserve entrance nearest the Seb. Community Center hosts a spectacular vine with brilliant fall colors and delicious fruit this time of year. Whether you are leading an adult tour or docenting for Learning Laguna, here are some interesting cultural facts to share.



Everything on the grape – except the roots, which are poisonous – is edible: the fruit, leaves, young shoots, and tendrils. Even though grapes are about 81% water, they are loaded with nutrients: per 100 grams there is 16 mg of calcium, 12 mg of phosphorus, .4 mg of iron, 3 mg of sodium, 158 mg of potassium, 100 units of vit. A, and some vit. B and C! Encourage your students to sample them: delicious and slightly less sweet than table grapes.

Sap tapped from the vines provides a cool, refreshing and somewhat sweet drink (especially in the spring).

Large grape leaves can be used to wrap fish or meat for in-the-ground cooking. Ripe grapes were historically used to bait bird traps and as bait to attract fresh fish. Crushed and whole grapes were tied to a string and thrown into the ocean to successfully attract crabs. Grape vines were used traditionally to construct fish traps and fish dams. Vines were fashioned into cordage, (ask your students to name all the ways we utilize cordage), and foundations for baskets.

Birds and other animals relish the grapes and the vines provide thick cover. Viticulturalists commonly use the wild grape as rootstock for wine grapes.

Quick Wild Grape Tea (Bodega Miwok style) Please Note: this may stain your cup!

Pre-heat your cup with boiling water for one to two minutes, until it is hot to touch. Remove water.

Crush enough grapes to cover the bottom of cup, leaving skins, seeds, pulp and juice. Fill your cup with boiling water.

Cover and steep for at least 5 minutes, longer for more flavor.

Add honey or sugar, relax and enjoy a taste of real California.



Adapted from *The California Wild Grape*, by David W. Peri



Black Headed Grosbeaks (BHGR) come to riparian areas of Sonoma County to breed each Summer. Wild grape commonly combines with other plants to provide good nest substrate and cover. Studies have shown BHGR nest success positively correlates with percent cover provided by Wild Grape. BHGR is a generalist when it comes to foraging, however, at the end of the season, it takes advantage of ripening blackberries, and possibly wild grape.