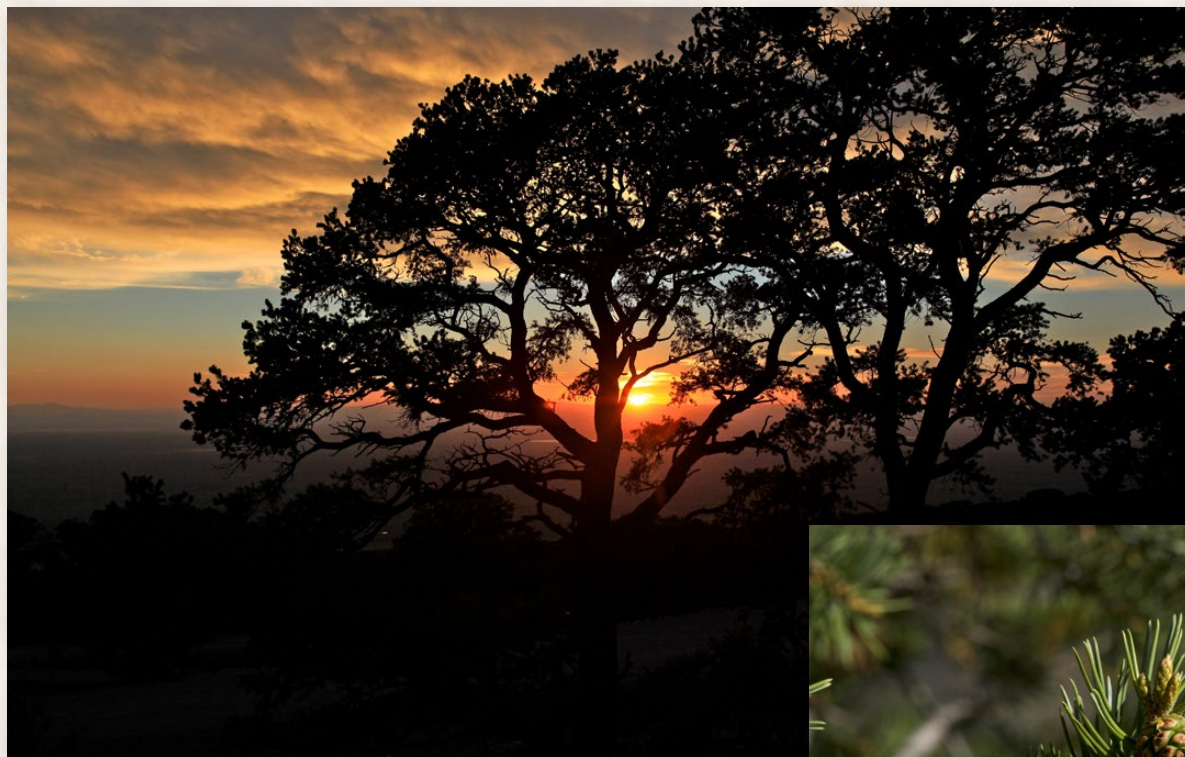


# ETHNOBOTANY: Understanding the cultural use of plants in Colorado

May 2019

In Colorado many cultures including the Ute and Apache tribes, and later the Hispano communities, were inextricably connected to the diverse plants and habitats found throughout the state. Combining traditional ecological knowledge with archaeological data, such as current research in the San Luis Valley, creates a more holistic understanding of past life experiences.



## Piñon Pine

Scientific Name: *Pinus edulis*  
Common Names: piñon pine, pinyon pine, two-needle pine, izeekchin mijee (Jicarilla Apache), trementina (Spanish)  
Family: Pinaceae (Pine Family)

The tree is most often prized for the nuts it produces which are a delicacy and an important food source both in the United States and abroad. The sap also has many uses such as repairing cloth items and waterproofing baskets.



## Indian Ricegrass



Scientific Name: *Achnatherum hymenoides*  
Common Name: Indian Ricegrass  
Family: Poaceae (Grass Family)

The seeds are collected in great quantities and then toasted to burn off the small hairs. The harvesting process, which inevitably caused some seeds to fall on disturbed ground, helped to reseed areas and create abundance for future generations.

## Yucca

Scientific Name: *Yucca glauca*  
Common Names: soapweed yucca, ich'ááwosh (Jicarilla Apache)  
Family: Asparagaceae (Asparagus Family)

Yucca is valuable as a food source as both the flowers and fruit are edible. When steamed, the flowers are similar to cooked spinach. The stems of the yucca are also utilized for a variety of items, most often as baskets and rope.



## Chokecherry

Scientific Name: *Prunus virginiana*  
Common Names: chokecherry, dzé mich'ili (Jicarilla Apache), Capulin (Spanish)  
Family: Rosacea (Rose Family)

Chokecherry is an important food resource and treasured throughout Colorado by Native Americans, Hispano groups and other non-natives for the delicious berries that are harvested in late summer and often processed into preserves. The pits contain hydrocyanic acid and thus processing the seeds is essential and eating of the pits is not recommended.



## Three-Leaf Sumac

Scientific Name: *Rhus trilobata*  
Common Names: three-leaf sumac; skunkbush, lemonade berry, kii (Jicarilla Apache), lemita (Spanish)  
Family: Anacardiaceae (Cashew or Sumac Family)

The berries, particularly the skins, are tart, and are widely used to create a tart beverage, similar to lemonade.

## ARCHAEOLOGY & HISTORIC PRESERVATION MONTH