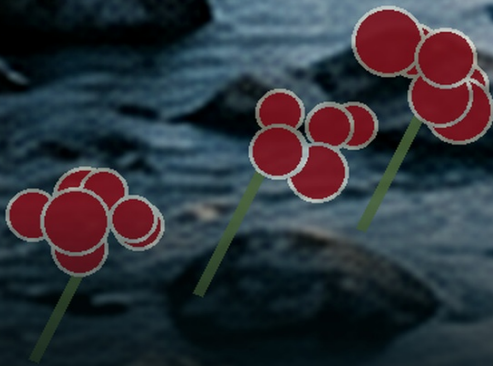


CHILKO LAKE PLANT FIELD GUIDE

Tâilhqox Biny mountain forest • Season 8

FIND IT. PURIFY IT. STORE IT.



TREES

EDIBLE

TOXIC

TRADITION

KNOWLEDGE • SKILL • DISCIPLINE • SURVIVAL

Independent educational field guide • verify current laws, local conditions, and expert guidance

REGION AT A GLANCE

Mountain forest trees, interior berries, poisonous meadow plants and high-elevation traditional-use species.

Filming region: Tâilhqox Biny / Chilko Lake and the eastern Coast Mountains, British Columbia, Canada

Alone season(s): 8

Ecology: High-elevation interior lake, dry Douglas-fir and lodgepole pine forest, spruce-fir slopes, burns and alpine transition

Chilko Lake sits high on the dry eastern side of the Coast Mountains. Lower benches can support Douglas-fir, lodgepole pine and aspen, while colder slopes carry Engelmann spruce and subalpine fir. Fire, wind and elevation create a patchwork of berry fields, meadows and dense conifer stands. Several highly toxic bulb and wet-meadow plants occur in the same openings used for food gathering.

FIELD PRIORITIES

- Learn lodgepole pine, Douglas-fir, Engelmann spruce and subalpine fir before selecting poles or fuel.
- Rule out death camas before collecting any onion-like bulb or grass-like leaf.
- Rule out water hemlock and monkshood before gathering wet-meadow greens.
- Berries can be abundant after fire, but harvest must respect Tâilhqot'in stewardship and wildlife needs.
- High elevation shortens the season; record slope aspect and frost exposure with every plant observation.

NON-NEGOTIABLE PLANT SAFETY

Never consume a plant from one photo, one common name or one guide. Positive identification requires multiple traits and a reliable regional source. Do not experiment with medicinal dosing. For suspected poisoning, remove plant material from the mouth, preserve a sample or photo, contact emergency services or a poison centre, and do not induce vomiting unless directed.

POSITIVE IDENTIFICATION PROTOCOL

Use a repeatable process. Confidence is built from independent features, not intuition.

1**1. PLACE**

Record habitat, moisture, slope, elevation and nearby dominant plants.

2**2. FORM**

Decide tree, shrub, vine, herb, grass-like plant, fern or succulent.

3**3. LEAVES**

Check arrangement, shape, edge, veins, hairs, odor and underside.

4**4. STEM & BARK**

Look for thorns, sap, pith, lenticels, buds, twig color and texture.

5**5. FLOWER / FRUIT**

Count petals, inspect clusters, seed structures and fruit attachment.

6**6. CROSS-CHECK**

Match at least three reliable sources and rule out every dangerous look-alike.

AUTOMATIC STOP LIST

No tasting to identify.
No wetland roots.
No unknown white umbels.
No unknown bulbs.
No unknown milky sap.
No medicinal experiments.

DOCUMENTATION KIT

Photograph whole plant, leaf top and bottom, stem, bark, flowers, fruit and habitat. Add a scale object. Record date, location and confidence. Never let an AI label overrule a regional botanist.

TREES AND WOODY PLANTS

Identification, practical material properties and conservation cautions.

LOGEPOLE PINE

TREE / WOODY

Pinus contorta var. latifolia

IDENTIFY
Two needles per bundle, slender often straight trunk and small prickly cones that may remain closed for years; bark thin and scaly.

HABITAT & SEASON
Dry benches, burns, sandy soils and mountain slopes. Season: Year-round

DOCUMENTED USE
Straight poles, resinous kindling and dependable fuel. Fire-killed wood may be dry and easy to process.

CAUTION
Dead pine can fall suddenly and may contain beetle galleries. Resinous smoke needs good ventilation.

LOOK-ALIKES
Jack pine has more curved irregular cones and generally occurs farther east.

1

INTERIOR DOUGLAS-FIR

TREE / WOODY

Pseudotsuga menziesii var. glauca

IDENTIFY
Single soft needles; cones with three-pointed bracts extending beyond the scales; thick furrowed bark on older trees.

HABITAT & SEASON
Warm dry lower slopes and well-drained lake terraces. Season: Year-round

DOCUMENTED USE
Strong structural poles and dense long-burning fuel. Resinous dead twigs can support ignition.

CAUTION
True firs have upright cones and no protruding three-pointed bracts. Avoid enclosed smoky fires.

LOOK-ALIKES
Subalpine fir has smooth gray bark with resin blisters and flat needles.

2

TREES AND WOODY PLANTS

Identification, practical material properties and conservation cautions.

ENGELMANN SPRUCE

TREE / WOODY

Picea engelmannii

IDENTIFY
Sharp four-sided blue-green needles, thin flaky bark and long flexible hanging cones; narrow spire crown.

HABITAT & SEASON
Cool moist slopes, creek valleys and higher elevations. Season: Year-round

DOCUMENTED USE
Straight poles, roots and sheltered lower twigs for shelter and fire systems.

CAUTION
Shallow roots and snow loading create falling-tree hazards. Resin can irritate wounds.

LOOK-ALIKES
White spruce is similar; location, cone scales and twig hair require close inspection.

3

SUBALPINE FIR

TREE / WOODY

Abies lasiocarpa

IDENTIFY
Flat soft needles often swept upward, smooth gray bark with resin blisters and upright purple-brown cones that disintegrate on the tree.

HABITAT & SEASON
Cold high slopes, snow pockets and subalpine forest. Season: Year-round

DOCUMENTED USE
Flexible boughs make springy bedding and insulation when legally and lightly harvested. Wood is light and easy to carve.

CAUTION
Bough harvest can kill small trees. Fir burns quickly and produces less durable coals than dense Douglas-fir.

LOOK-ALIKES
Spruce needles are sharp and roll between fingers; fir needles are flat and soft.

4

TREES AND WOODY PLANTS

Identification, practical material properties and conservation cautions.

TREMBLING ASPEN

TREE / WOODY

Populus tremuloides

IDENTIFY

Round finely toothed leaves on flattened stalks that tremble, smooth pale green-white bark and clonal groves.

HABITAT & SEASON

Burns, avalanche tracks, meadows and lower mountain slopes. Season: Spring through fall foliage; wood year-round

DOCUMENTED USE

Light carving wood and quick fuel. Groves can indicate deeper soils and past disturbance.

CAUTION

Standing dead stems often rot internally. Bark preparations are not recommended without clinical guidance.

LOOK-ALIKES

Birch leaves are more pointed and bark peels; cottonwood leaves are larger and more triangular.

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BLACK COTTONWOOD

TREE / WOODY

Populus trichocarpa

IDENTIFY

Tall tree with large triangular to heart-shaped leaves, pale undersides and sticky aromatic buds.

HABITAT & SEASON

River mouths, floodplains and moist lake tributaries. Season: Buds late winter to spring; wood year-round

DOCUMENTED USE

Light wood for utensils and temporary boards. Buds have documented traditional external preparations.

CAUTION

Bud resin can trigger salicylate or fragrance reactions. Wet cottonwood is poor fuel.

LOOK-ALIKES

Aspen leaves are rounder and smaller; balsam poplar replaces cottonwood farther north.

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DOCUMENTED EDIBLE PLANTS

Documented foods only. Positive identification and safe preparation remain essential.

SASKATOON

DOCUMENTED EDIBLE

Amelanchier alnifolia

IDENTIFY

Shrub with oval toothed leaves, white five-petaled flowers and purple-blue berries with a small crown, borne in clusters.

HABITAT & SEASON

Dry openings, rocky slopes, forest edges and burns. Season: Mid- to late summer

DOCUMENTED USE

Ripe berries are a documented food and can be eaten fresh, cooked or dried.

CAUTION

Seeds contain small amounts of cyanogenic compounds; normal food use is traditional, but do not grind and consume large quantities of seeds.

LOOK-ALIKES

Chokecherry has longer flower clusters and a single hard pit; Saskatoon fruit has several small seeds and a crown.

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SOAPBERRY / SOOPOLALLIE

DOCUMENTED EDIBLE

Shepherdia canadensis

IDENTIFY

Opposite oval leaves with silvery or rusty scales, small yellowish flowers and translucent red-orange berries.

HABITAT & SEASON

Open conifer forest, dry slopes and burns. Season: Midsummer

DOCUMENTED USE

Ripe berries are a documented Indigenous food, traditionally whipped with water into a foam. They are bitter and rich in saponins.

CAUTION

Large amounts may upset the stomach. Cultural preparation knowledge matters; do not treat traditional foods as novelty challenges.

LOOK-ALIKES

Buffaloberry relatives vary; confirm opposite scaly leaves and translucent fruit.

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DOCUMENTED EDIBLE PLANTS

Documented foods only. Positive identification and safe preparation remain essential.

BLACK HUCKLEBERRYDOCUMENTED EDIBLE

Vaccinium membranaceum

IDENTIFY
Deciduous shrub with thin sharply toothed leaves, angular twigs and dark purple-black berries with a crown.

HABITAT & SEASON
Open forest, avalanche tracks and burned mountain slopes. Season: Late summer

DOCUMENTED USE
Ripe berries are documented food and can be eaten fresh, cooked or dried.

CAUTION
Bears rely on berry patches. Make noise, scan frequently and leave most fruit. Confirm woody *Vaccinium* stems and crown.

LOOK-ALIKES
Black nightshade is an herb with star-shaped flowers, not a woody shrub.

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KINNIKINNICK / BEARBERRYDOCUMENTED EDIBLE

Arctostaphylos uva-ursi

IDENTIFY
Low trailing evergreen with leathery spoon-shaped leaves, pink urn flowers and bright red mealy berries.

HABITAT & SEASON
Dry sandy terraces, open pine forest and rocky ground. Season: Fruit late summer through winter

DOCUMENTED USE
Ripe berries are documented emergency food but are dry and usually improved by cooking. Leaves have extensive traditional uses.

CAUTION
Do not make strong medicinal tea or use during pregnancy/kidney disease. Confirm the trailing woody mat.

LOOK-ALIKES
Lingonberry leaves are more oval with pale dots beneath and fruit with a clearer crown.

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DOCUMENTED EDIBLE PLANTS

Documented foods only. Positive identification and safe preparation remain essential.

WILD STRAWBERRY

DOCUMENTED EDIBLE

Fragaria virginiana

IDENTIFY
Low runners, three toothed leaflets, white five-petaled flowers and small red fruit with seeds on the surface.

HABITAT & SEASON
Meadows, open forest, burns and shore terraces. Season: Summer

DOCUMENTED USE
Fully ripe fruit is documented food.

CAUTION
Low fruit can be contaminated by animals; wash or cook. Do not identify from leaves alone.

LOOK-ALIKES
Cinquefoils often have five leaflets or dry seed heads.

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FIREWEED

DOCUMENTED EDIBLE

Chamerion angustifolium

IDENTIFY
Tall colonies with narrow leaves, magenta four-petaled flowers and long capsules filled with silky seed.

HABITAT & SEASON
Burns, roadsides, avalanche tracks and disturbed shorelines. Season: Young shoots spring; flowers summer

DOCUMENTED USE
Young shoots and leaves are documented food after positive identification and cooking. Dry stalks yield light fiber and tinder.

CAUTION
Older plants become tough. Early shoots can be confused with other herbs before leaves expand.

LOOK-ALIKES
Purple loosestrife has opposite leaves and dense many-flowered spikes.

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TOXIC PLANTS - AVOID

High-consequence species to recognize before any gathering begins.

WESTERN WATER HEMLOCK

TOXIC - AVOID

Cicuta douglasii

IDENTIFY

Tall wetland herb with divided leaves, white umbrella flower clusters and thick chambered roots.

HABITAT & SEASON

Wet meadows, marshes, ditches and slow tributaries. Season: Spring through fall

DOCUMENTED USE

No use. Prohibit wetland root gathering.

CAUTION

Extremely poisonous; small amounts can cause seizures and death. Roots are especially dangerous.

LOOK-ALIKES

Cow parsnip and angelica also have white umbels. Never distinguish by taste.

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DEATH CAMAS

TOXIC - AVOID

Toxicoscordion venenosum

IDENTIFY

Grass-like leaves from a bulb and a cluster of cream-green six-part star flowers; no onion odor.

HABITAT & SEASON

Dry to seasonally wet meadows and open slopes. Season: Spring to early summer

DOCUMENTED USE

No use. Learn before harvesting any wild onion.

CAUTION

All parts are poisonous and cooking does not make them safe.

LOOK-ALIKES

Wild onions smell strongly of onion in leaves and bulbs; blue camas has blue flowers but still requires expert identification.

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TOXIC PLANTS - AVOID

High-consequence species to recognize before any gathering begins.

FALSE HELLEBORE

TOXIC - AVOID

Veratrum viride

IDENTIFY

Tall herb with broad pleated leaves wrapped around a stout stem and greenish branched flower clusters.

HABITAT & SEASON

Wet mountain meadows, seepage slopes and streambanks. Season: Spring through summer

DOCUMENTED USE

No food use.

CAUTION

All parts are poisonous and may cause severe vomiting, slow pulse, low blood pressure and collapse.

LOOK-ALIKES

Young shoots can resemble edible wild leeks, but lack onion odor and have broad pleated leaves.

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MOUNTAIN MONKSHOOD

TOXIC - AVOID

Aconitum delphiniifolium

IDENTIFY

Deeply divided palmate leaves and dark blue-purple hood-shaped flowers.

HABITAT & SEASON

Moist subalpine meadows, streambanks and avalanche tracks. Season: Summer

DOCUMENTED USE

No use.

CAUTION

All parts contain potent aconitine alkaloids and can cause fatal heart and nerve effects.

LOOK-ALIKES

Larkspurs also have blue flowers and are likewise unsafe.

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TRADITIONAL-USE PLANTS

Published cultural or historical uses - not prescriptions or dosing advice.

YARROW

TRADITIONAL-USE

Achillea millefolium

IDENTIFY

Aromatic fern-like leaves and flat white to pink flower clusters.

HABITAT & SEASON

Dry openings, trails, burns and lake gravel. Season: Summer through fall

DOCUMENTED USE

Published traditional uses include external washes and aromatic preparations; fully dry tops can be light tinder.

CAUTION

Allergy and drug-interaction concerns apply. Do not put dirty leaves on wounds.

LOOK-ALIKES

Poison hemlock is taller with hollow spotted stems and umbrella flowers.

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LABRADOR TEA

TRADITIONAL-USE

Rhododendron groenlandicum

IDENTIFY

Evergreen shrub with rolled-edge leaves and rusty wool beneath; white terminal flower clusters.

HABITAT & SEASON

Wet spruce forest, bogs and cold seepage areas. Season: Year-round leaves

DOCUMENTED USE

A documented traditional beverage and medicinal plant.

CAUTION

Strong or repeated infusions can cause illness; bog rosemary is a toxic look-alike. Use only with local expert guidance.

LOOK-ALIKES

Bog rosemary leaves are narrower and pale beneath without rusty wool.

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TRADITIONAL-USE PLANTS

Published cultural or historical uses - not prescriptions or dosing advice.

WILLOW

TRADITIONAL-USE

Salix species

IDENTIFY

Flexible woody shrubs with alternate leaves and catkins; many species occur from shorelines to alpine slopes.

HABITAT & SEASON

Wet thickets, lake margins, streams and avalanche tracks. Season: Year-round twigs

DOCUMENTED USE

Flexible rods for baskets, wattle, stakes and repair splints. Bark has documented salicylate-related traditional uses.

CAUTION

Do not self-dose bark, especially with aspirin allergy, anticoagulants, kidney disease or in children with viral illness.

LOOK-ALIKES

Alder has cone-like female catkins; dwarf birch has rounder toothed leaves.

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HEARTLEAF ARNICA

TRADITIONAL-USE

Arnica cordifolia

IDENTIFY

Low perennial with opposite heart-shaped leaves near the base and yellow daisy-like flower heads.

HABITAT & SEASON

Open conifer forest, dry slopes and disturbed mountain ground. Season: Summer

DOCUMENTED USE

Published traditional and herbal uses are primarily external for bruising and soreness.

CAUTION

Do not ingest. Arnica can be toxic internally and may irritate broken skin or people allergic to the daisy family.

LOOK-ALIKES

Several yellow asters look similar; flower and leaf details require expert confirmation.

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SEASONAL AND HABITAT PLANNING

Availability is local and variable. Use these patterns to plan observation, not to assume harvest.

PHASE	WHAT TO EXPECT	FIELD EMPHASIS
SPRING / THAW	New shoots, flowers, catkins and wetland hazards become visible.	Learn leaves and flowers before fruit; avoid roots and bulbs.
SUMMER / PEAK GROWTH	Maximum foliage; most edible greens and traditional-use herbs are identifiable.	Photograph multiple traits; note habitat and abundance.
AUTUMN / FRUIT & FROST	Most berries, hips, cones and seed structures mature.	Confirm entire plant; leave food for wildlife and regeneration.
WINTER / PERSISTENT	Evergreen shrubs, bark, twigs, cones and persistent fruit remain.	Rely on woody traits; snow and frost obscure herb identification.

HABITAT FORECAST

HABITAT	LIKELY PLANTS	PRIMARY RISK
Dry ridge / exposed slope	Lodgepole pine, Interior Douglas-fir, Engelmann spruce	Windthrow, fire, protected slow-growing plants
Moist forest / sheltered valley	Subalpine fir, Trembling aspen, Black cottonwood	Look-alikes, falling timber, poor visibility
Wetland / peat / stream edge	Western water hemlock, Death camas	Water hemlock or toxic bog shrubs; unstable ground
Open disturbance / camp edge	Saskatoon, Soapberry / soopolallie, Black huckleberry, Kinnikinnick / bearberry	Contamination, invasive species, human chemicals

SEASONAL REALITY

A late frost, drought, fire, flood, browsing pressure or poor flowering year can remove an expected food source. Build plans around several independent resources and assume that every crop may fail.

LOOK-ALIKE AND HAZARD MATRIX

The most important plant knowledge is often knowing what not to touch, taste or dig.

HAZARD	FIELD CUE	RULE
Western water hemlock	Tall wetland herb with divided leaves, white umbrella flower clusters and thick chambered roots.	Extremely poisonous; small amounts can cause seizures and death. Roots are especially dangerous.
Death camas	Grass-like leaves from a bulb and a cluster of cream-green six-part star flowers; no onion odor.	All parts are poisonous and cooking does not make them safe.
False hellebore	Tall herb with broad pleated leaves wrapped around a stout stem and greenish branched flower clusters.	All parts are poisonous and may cause severe vomiting, slow pulse, low blood pressure and collapse.
Mountain monkshood	Deeply divided palmate leaves and dark blue-purple hood-shaped flowers.	All parts contain potent aconitine alkaloids and can cause fatal heart and nerve effects.

SUSPECTED POISONING

1. Stop exposure.
2. Remove material from mouth; rinse.
3. Do not induce vomiting.
4. Save a sample/photo.
5. Call emergency services or poison control.
6. Monitor breathing and consciousness.

HARVEST ETHICS

Take the common, leave the rare.
Never girdle a tree.
Avoid roots and whole plants.
Leave wildlife food.
Follow Indigenous and protected-area rules.
Restore disturbed ground.

SOURCES, SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

Taxonomy and regional occurrence change. Verify the current name, distribution and legal status before publication or field use.

1. E-Flora BC: Electronic Atlas of the Flora of British Columbia
University of British Columbia - regional flora

<https://linnet.geog.ubc.ca/Atlas/Atlas.aspx>

2. Tree Species Compendium and identification resources
Government of British Columbia - government tree reference

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/plants-animals-ecosystems/plant-species/tree-species-compe>

3. Flora of North America North of Mexico
Flora of North America Association - scientific flora

http://floranorthamerica.org/Main_Page

4. Food Plants of Interior First Peoples
Nancy J. Turner; Royal BC Museum - ethnobotany

<https://publications.royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/product/food-plants-of-interior-first-peoples/>

5. Plants of Coastal British Columbia
Pojar, MacKinnon and Alaback; Lone Pine Publishing - regional field guide

6. Canadian Poisonous Plants Information System and poison-safety resources
Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada / Canadian poison centres - poison safety

<https://infopoison.ca/>

7. Plants of the World Online
Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew - taxonomy and distribution

<https://powo.science.kew.org/>

INDEPENDENT PUBLICATION NOTICE

This guide is an independent educational reference and is not affiliated with HISTORY, the Alone television series, local Indigenous governments or protected-area authorities. Traditional-use notes summarize published sources and do not transfer cultural authority. Local knowledge holders, current regulations and qualified medical or botanical professionals take precedence.