

Native Plant Spotlight by Krys Kirkwood

Fritillaria (affinis) lanceolata – chocolate lily, checker lily



This perennial herb grows 1-3 feet from scaly bulb. Blooming time is mid-spring. The flowers are dark purple mottled with greenish-yellow, bell-shaped with the appearance of being 'checkered' and nodding in singles or clusters. It typically likes open places like grassy meadows, bluffs and open woods, from sea level to nearly sub alpine, along the coast and inland along the major drainages. Bulbs of chocolate lily were eaten by several coastal Native Americans. These flowers can be rare in many places and should be left undisturbed.

Camassia quamash – common camas



This perennial herb grows 6-26 inches in height from a deep egg-shaped bulb. Bloom time is mid-spring. The flowers can be pale to deep blue, occasionally white, star-shaped opening wide. Bloom are usually 5 to many in a terminal spike. You can find these growing in grassy slopes and meadows, low to middle elevations. Camas is one of several beautiful lily-family plants restricted, in our region, to rainshadow climates. Lewis and Clark reported that this plant occurred in such abundance that the meadows looked like lakes of clear water. We can blame their depletion to agriculture and urban sprawl. Camas was an important staple food, and the bulbs were eaten wherever available. The bulbs were harvested during or soon after flowering, so as not to confuse them with death-camas.

I strongly urge leaving any of our native plants undisturbed. Enjoy them in their natural environment. Seek out nurseries and professionals who sell and/or deal with natives if you are wanting to add any to your garden.

- Photos: Krys Kirkwood
- Reference: Plants of the Pacific Northwest Coast by Pojar and Mackinnon
Wildflowers of the Pacific Northwest by Mark Turner and Phyllis Gustafson