

# Native Plant Spotlight by Krys Kirkwood

## **Opuntia fragilis - brittle prickly-pear cactus**



used on the coast.

This is a low, mat-forming, succulent perennial that grows to about 2-8 inches high, with a sprawling habit. It has large, showy, yellow blooms in late spring to early summer (typically June in the San Juans). You can find this growing in dry, open sites on sandy or gravelly soils at low elevations. In the northwest, this is the only native cactus west of the Cascades. The stems of the brittle prickly-pear were roasted and eaten as a green vegetable by interior peoples, but they were apparently little

## **Sedum spathulifolium – broadleaf stonecrop, pacific sedum**



chewed the leaves in the 9<sup>th</sup> month of pregnancy to ease childbirth.

Broad-leaved stonecrop is a succulent perennial that grows 2-8 inches high, from stout rhizomes. It is quite common to rocky outcrops, cliffs, coastal bluffs, and forest openings on coarser soils. It blooms mid-summer with flat-topped clusters of bright yellow flowers. The fleshy rosettes of leaves are small in the center and larger around the outside, being a gray to sage green turning reddish in full sun. Some native peoples used stonecrop as a styptic poultice; the women of others

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