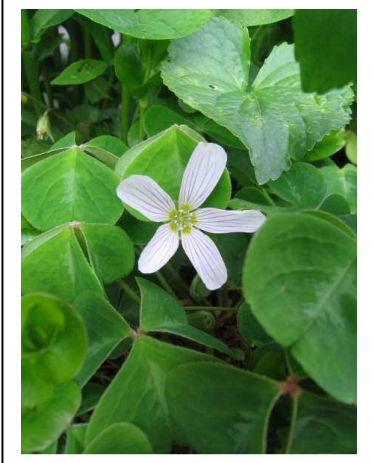


Native Plant Spotlight by Krys Kirkwood

Oxalis oregana – redwood sorrel, wood sorrel, Oregon oxalis



Wood sorrel is a common perennial that grows 2-8 inches in height, and spreads easily by thick, scaly creeping rhizomes. Clustered at root tips, leaves are cloverlike with 3 heart-shaped and folded leaflets that are often maroon underneath, plain or marbled green above. The white to pale-pinkish flowers bloom spring and summer. They sometimes have reddish veins and sit solitary on long stalks. Wood sorrel can be found growing on undisturbed forest floors among redwood and Douglas fir at low to middle elevations. To maximize interception of light in the dim forest understory, the wood sorrel normally holds its leaflets horizontally. But at times, such as in direct sunlight or at night, it creases the leaflets sharply downward, reportedly taking 6 minutes to fold up and 30 minutes to flatten out again. This may be an adaptation to conserve moisture, but the leaflets also fold in the rain, perhaps to reduce the impact of raindrops. Some native peoples ate the leaves of wood sorrel. The plants contain oxalic acid, which gives them a sour, tangy taste and is **potentially harmful**. This can be a great ground cover in the garden if you don't mind it being a little invasive. The plant's wanderings can be controlled by barriers, or it's easy to rip out.

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 want 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