

Native Plant Spotlight by Krys Kirkwood

Pterospora andromedea – Pinedrops (Ericaceae)



Pinedrops is the tallest saprophyte in our region, up to 3 feet tall. Being a saprophyte means it obtains its nutrition via a host, like the conifers. It has reddish-brown, stick-hairy stems that are often persistent through the winter. The flowers are white to yellow or pink, urn-shaped and thought to resemble drops of resin from pines (and other conifers) under which they grow. It usually blooms around mid-summer.

Pinedrops grow in rich humus in mixed forests at low to high elevations. It can be found west and east of the Cascade Mountains. No uses of this plant by coastal peoples are known. Some Okanagan people know it as 'coyote's arrow'.

It has been noticed that deer seem to find it quite tasty. I was trying to take a photo opportunity and found many munched down to 3 inches from the ground.

Monotropa uniflora – Indian-pipe (Ericaceae)



Roots of Indian-pipe are connected via fungi to the roots of nearby coniferous trees, making it a saprophyte. In this manner Indian-pipe, which lacks chlorophyll and so cannot make its own food, obtains nutrition from the efforts of another plant (the conifer). Indian-pipe is a fleshy, waxy-white or pinkish perennial, blackening with age. It tends to flower in late spring-early summer with a single white bloom. It grows to 2-10 inches in height. Indian-pipe grows in humus in shaded, usually mature, coniferous forest: at low elevations, coastal, west-side of the

Cascade Mountains. In the Straits Salish and Nlaka'pamux languages, the name for Indian-pipe means 'wolf's urine'; it is associated with wolves and is said to grow wherever a wolf urinates. Among the Nlaka'pamux it is an indicator for wood mushrooms in the coming season. It was used medicinally as a poultice for wounds that would not heal. The common name 'Indian-pipe' refers to the pipe-like flowers. It is also called 'ghost flower', 'corpse plant', and 'ice plant'—names inspired by the unusual color and texture of the plant. Note that while the flower hangs down, the fruit eventually points up.

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