

Plants of the Month: April

Indian Plum



Oemleria
a.k.a. osoberry or skunk bush
Deciduous shrub. Native.



Leaves come out early in spring. Bright lime green, darken in summer, turn yellow in fall. If you crush, they smell like cucumber or watermelon rind.

Flowers in March or April. Whitish green bell / pendant shape. Clusters of ~10 blossoms. Female flowers smell like cucumber. Male flowers smell bad.

Orange berries ripen to deep blue-black in early summer. Edible. Bittersweet.

Twigs are slender and green. Bigger branches are reddish / purplish brown.

5—20 feet tall. Grows straight in sunny places, arches in the shade.



Uses: Birds, rodents, deer, bear, foxes and coyotes, all eat the small, bittersweet fruits. (Birds usually eat them before humans can get to them!) Bees enjoy the nectar from the flowers. Fruit is edible. Native Americans ate berries fresh or dried, and made tea from the bark. They chewed twigs then mixed with oil to use as an anesthetic salve. The wood can be used for arrows, spoons, combs, carvings.