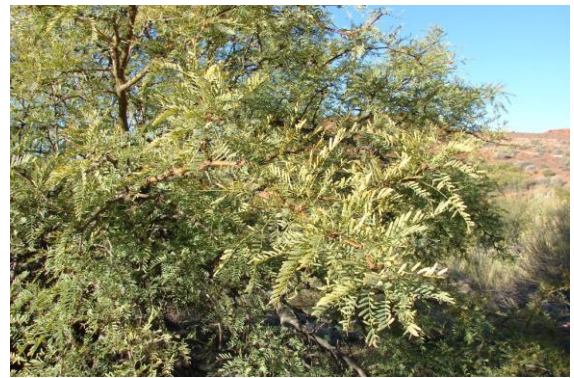




## Bitterbrush (*Purshia tridentata*)

A member of the rose family, the Bitterbrush is a slow growing shrub that is a critical food source for North American livestock. Wildlife and livestock find the shrub very palatable that creates potential overuse. Thriving at higher elevations, these shrubs are known to sustain well during cold winters and need as little as 8 inches of precipitation per year.

**Description:** The bitterbrush is a large growing desert shrub, growing up to 2 to 6 feet tall and 8 feet wide. Branches that reach the surface of the soil may develop roots. White and yellow flowers bloom abundantly during the spring and early summer. Its three lobed leaves range in color from dark green to light green. Seed bearing begins between 8 and 10 years of age.



**Location:** Bitterbrush stretches across 340 million acres of western America including over parts of Canada and Mexico. Found at 4,000 to 11,000 feet in elevation, bitterbrush flourishes in dry lake beds, woodlands, terraces, and foothills. Droughts do not affect these shrubs; however they do not tolerate shade. Unlike other shrubs, bitterbrush is not fire tolerant. Wildfires obliterate areas of growth and recovery is typically unsuccessful.



**Uses:** Known as a palatable shrub, bitterbrush provides significant nutrients to livestock and wildlife within the western United States. Small animals and birds find refuge under the shrub's canopies. Mitigating areas of erosion, along with mined areas, it is also used for landscaping.

Historically, western Native Americans produced leaf wash for rashes, insect bites, and skin diseases. Bitterbrush root and leaf tea provided a natural remedy for a number of diseases including pneumonia, chicken pox, lung infection, and liver disease.

**Sources:**

“Bitterbrush.” *USDA*, 13 Dec. 2018, [https://www.fs.fed.us/wildflowers/plant-of-the-week/purshia\\_tridentata.shtml](https://www.fs.fed.us/wildflowers/plant-of-the-week/purshia_tridentata.shtml)

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