

OPINION

Medicine along the Applegate Ridge Trail

BY MICHELLE LAFAVE

When we're sick, most people nowadays open a medicine cabinet full of pills and syrups purchased from a drugstore. Even if your array of potions includes stock from a local herbalist, do you have the knowledge to treat a simple health issue such as a cough, infected injury or digestive complaint on your own? What did people do in times before modern medicine? They took a walk in their backyard!

In the Applegate Valley, we have a wealth of medicine right at our fingertips. I am talking about native medicinal plants that grow in abundance. You can find them along the newly proposed Applegate Ridge Trail.

Let me start with the ethics of wildcrafting. Do no harm. Take only what you need and leave plenty for the animals. Offer the Earth something in return such as a prayer or small natural gift. Protect the gift of natural medicine by becoming an environmental steward and working to keep our forests healthy and whole.

You don't need to be an herbalist or a botanist to become familiar with the most common plants that define our ecosystem. Some of the most obvious medicinal species include oak, pine, manzanita, buckbrush, Oregon grape, and usnea (Old Man's Beard). You may already know these forest friends but haven't realized or experienced their medicinal properties. For now, I've only provided a brief introduction.

Pine (*Pinus* spp.). You can't miss this giant with its fragrant bundles of green needles. For a cold with a cough, use pine needles in tea or chew a piece of the resin (aka pitch). For splinters, apply slightly warmed pitch. Not for extended internal use or use with kidney inflammation. (Moore, 2003)

Oak (*Quercus* spp.). Topically, use any part of the astringent oak for in the field first-aid treatment of cuts or insect stings. Simply chew the leaves and apply to the bite or make a tea for a wash. You can also powder the oak galls (formed where wasps lay their eggs) for external

use. (Moore, 2003)

Buckbrush, Mountain Lilac (*Ceanothus* spp.). "Redroot" is the powerful lymphatic tonic made from the roots of this widespread bush that dominates our Southern slopes. Redroot is useful in acute inflammatory conditions such as tonsillitis and sinusitis and for shrinking nonfibrous cysts. Not for use with medicines that alter blood coagulation. (Moore, 2003)

Our health is directly connected to the health of our environment. The rapid increase of cancers and other diseases of modernity go hand in hand with the degradation of our ecosystem. We are grateful to live in the beautiful Applegate Valley where we may enjoy the abundance of many intact natural forests. The preservation of our local wildlands may provide us with cures to the diseases that threaten to plague us in the future. Why look to the Amazon rainforest for medicine when we have medicine right here.

If you are interested in learning to identify native plants, join the Applegate Trails Association on one of our educational hikes. Seasoned members of the community will be happy to share their knowledge with you.

Do you have specialized knowledge that you would like to share with the community? Maybe you would like to share your passion for local history, bird watching, or environmental education on a future hike? Get in touch—we'd love to see you on the trail. Look for our schedule of upcoming hikes on our website, www.applegatetrails.org.

Michelle LaFave
Applegate Trails Association
Board of Directors
michelle@applegatetrails.org
www.applegatetrails.org

Reference: Moore, Michael. *Medicinal Plants of the Mountain West*. Santa Fe, NM: Museum of New Mexico Press, 2003.

Ed note: If you can't identify it, don't eat it.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Opinion Pieces and Letters to the Editor represent the opinion of the author, not that of the *Applegater* or the Applegate Valley Community Newspaper. We are a community-based newspaper that receives diverse opinions on different topics. Letters should be no longer than 450 words, and may be edited for grammar and length. Opinion Pieces should be no longer than 600 words. All Letters and Opinion Pieces must be signed, with a full street address or P.O. Box and phone number. Individual Letters may or may not be published in consecutive issues.

Address Opinion Pieces and Letters to the Editor to:
The Applegater c/o Applegate Valley Community Newspaper, Inc.
7386 Highway 238 • PMB 308
Jacksonville, OR 97530
Email: gater@applegater.org

You are much appreciated

Dear Editor:

Your newspaper is much appreciated with historical events of the local community, ideas, personal stories, events and numerous other articles along with ads! We have those who purchase ads thereby supporting your Gater to thank as well!

All the best as you continue to publish news.

Diane Kirby

The Applegater unites us

To the Editor:

Once again my short sojourn in this awesome valley was brightened by the Applegater uniting us across all our diversities. From Janeen's hikes to Chris Bratt's eco-comments, the Gater instructs, entertains and, above all, creates community.

One feature I am especially thankful for is the tree map included in the summer issue, showing us in great detail the types and varieties of the trees and where they are located in our valley. I will refer to it for many years to come.

My seasonal sayonara and see you next spring.

Best,
Barb Summerhawk

Applegate Trails Association takes confident strides

BY DAVID CALAHAN

The Applegate Trails Association (ATA) continues to make progress like those strong strides at the beginning of a hike. Of course it is all due to dedicated folks who want to make a difference in our community. These volunteers are working to develop a system of hiking, mountain-biking and equestrian trails in the mountains surrounding our valley. Our primary project, the Applegate Ridge Trail (ART), follows the ridges overlooking the Middle Applegate and the Rogue River. The views are simply stunning!

Our recon scouting team has made much progress in identifying the ART on the western, center and eastern sections. The last piece to document, the northern section, will be completed this fall. We have made heaps of progress with all the paperwork and communication that is necessary to accomplish our goal.

Progress means we now have a bank account and we are applying for our nonprofit status with the assistance of pro bono legal counsel. This filing is currently

one of our largest expenses. That, coupled with other expenses, means it is time to ask for contributions. Your donation in any amount would be very much appreciated. Donations will be tax-deductible once our nonprofit status is approved, no matter what the date of your contribution. And with a donation to ATA you can be assured it will benefit our community with a minimum of overhead. After all, we work for free.

Progress also means you can send your donation to our new postal box: Applegate Trails Association, P.O. Box 105, Jacksonville, OR 97530.

To see the ART done and completed is a long trek and we are still on that first steady incline, not anywhere near needing a second wind yet. Some of our best vistas are still ahead of us, but they can wait while we enjoy this moment in time.

David Calahan
david@applegatetrails.org
541-899-1226

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