

word nerd

By RYAN HUME
FOR COAST WEEKENDSHANTY
[ΣÆN•TI]

noun

1. a shoddily built shack; a hovel or dilapidated cabin
2. originally, a sailor's work song, often sung in unison during labor at sea to concentrate on the rhythm of the job on deck. The term has come to encompass any ballad about life on the ocean.

adjective

3. a class-based pejorative cruelly projected upon an area or people to convey a sense of poverty or general unemptiness, i.e., Shantytown or Shanty Irish

Origin

These two different definitions — one landlocked and dismissed, the other launched from the tongue into salty air — both arise from the Francophonous world with separate roots. The hovel shanty is the 19th century output of a Canadian French noun, *chantier*, meaning “logging camp” or “hut,” and burrows all the way back, through Old French and Latin, to



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Shanties by a canal

the Ancient Greek word, *kantḗlios*, which refers to a donkey.

The sea shanty is a now-common variant spelling of chanty, first noted in 1867, which burst out of the modern French verb, *chanter*, meaning “to sing,” and is closely related linguistically to chant, as in the repetitive expression of an excited crowd.

“Sea shanty singers (from the French chanter, to sing) will be in full voice this weekend for the Graveyard of the Pacific event that takes place Saturday and Sunday at various locations, including the Fort Columbia Theatre, the Columbia River Maritime Museum and the

Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center at Cape Disappointment.”

—Cate Gabel, “Sea shanties ring in Graveyard of the Pacific weekend,” Coast Weekend, Oct. 21, 2010

“On Saturday, the Port of Ilwaco is under attack.

The black flag will be raised at high noon to cannon and musket fire, as swashbucklers, scallywags, muzzleloaders and mountain men launch a rambunctious raid, led by the Rifle Loot & Salvage Co.

“As black-powder cannon salutes blast and the sounds of sea shanties fill the air, a living history pirate encampment will display weapons, cargo and knot-tying. Visitors can also taste biscuits and learn how to prevent scurvy.”

—“All hands on deck,” Coast Weekend, May 18, 2006 

Wild Side

MOSSES
AND LICHENSBy LYNETTE RAE
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FOR COAST WEEKEND

Thriving everywhere except the extreme polar ice caps, mosses and lichens are routinely mistaken for each other all over the world. Since both are low-growing plantlike organisms that prefer moist, shady, fixed locations, it's easy to understand the confusion. But a close look reveals their differences. Here along our coastline, where water and shadow seem to combine to form their perfect environment, a glance in almost any direction brings an opportunity to practice.

Classified independently in the division Bryophyta, there are currently 14,500 known species of mosses. Whether they're clinging to your woodpile, springing up through cracks in the sidewalk or carpeting the forest floor in a deep pile of emerald, these simple plants are all characterized by their primitive root structures and miniature leaflets and stems, all of which are visible to the naked eye.

Using photosynthesis, they convert sunlight into energy to sustain them-



LYNETTE RAE McADAMS PHOTO

On the branch of an apple tree, a Methusaleh's Beard lichen (center, light green) grows with a Hammered Shield lichen (right) and a common Northwest moss (left, dark green).

selves, but unlike true plants, they lack the complexity of a vascular system and have no way to move nutrients from place to place. This limitation ensures their small size, since it would be impossible for them to push food to terminal leaves at great distances.


Usually growing in rounded clumps or mounds, mosses have the ability to retain up to 20 times their weight in water, a necessity for reproduction which occurs through the distribution of spores. Strangely enough, they can also survive long periods of drought, where the structures of the moss become desiccated and dormant for months on end, only to be revived and flourishing within hours of rehydration.

Completely unrelated, lichens aren't any kind of plant at all, but rather, symbiotic organisms that arise when algae combine with fungus to become something wholly new and unique, the algae providing food through photosynthesis and the fungus offering structure and protection for the algae. More than 20,000 species of lichen exist worldwide, ranging in textures and colors, from bright green to

red, orange and even yellow. Slow growing and quite hardy, they are among some of the oldest living things on Earth, with one specimen believed to be more than 8,000 years old.

Able to flourish on a variety of substrates, lichens can be found on trees, rocks, houses and soils — basically anything that holds still. Highly absorbent, they are great indicators of environmental health and are frequently used to determine levels of toxins in air and water.

Throughout history, both mosses and lichens have been used by humans for a variety of purposes. Native Americans used moss to help insulate dwellings, cushion bedding, and as diapers or dressings for wounds — a practice still in use through the first World War. Some mosses, specifically Sphagnum, are also harvested for fuel, floral arrangements and for smoking malt in the production of Scotch whiskey.

Lichens are on the historical record as both food and clothing, and are still used today in toothpastes, deodorants and salves, as well as in the manufacture of antibiotics. 



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