

Balsamroot

(Balsamorhiza Sagittata)



Balsamroot has big leaves that dry stiff enough in the fall to sound like paper (xl/2).

Where does it grow? Balsamroot is a showy weed found on almost any eastern Oregon range. The yellow flowers are seen along open ridges and fairly dry sunny slopes early in the season. It grows in tufts here and there, living with grass, weeds, and sagebrush. Sometimes heavy grazing or drought will thin out range plants. Balsamroot usually survives well and may increase following those conditions. It can thus be a sign of overused spots on the range.

Is it important? Balsamroot is a weed but fairly good forage on spring range. The yellow flowers make good salad for livestock. Cattle, sheep, and deer eat the leaves too, when the plant is tender. It is no good after it begins to dry up in mid summer. This plant often serves as a sign of range readiness in the spring. The bright yellow blossoms appear about the time grass is able to take grazing without damage.

What does it look like? It usually is a bunch or tuft of large leaves. The yellow flowers on tall stems are a foot or 2 high. They look like sunflowers. Each leaf is shaped like a large arrowhead if smoothed out flat. The plant grows early on dry sites and the entire plant dries up early in the season. The dry leaves and flower stalks remain in place. Leaves become brittle and papery.

Description:

Length of life -- Perennial.

Height -- Usually about 12 to 24 inches.

Leaves -- Arrowhead-shaped leaves, growing in a bunch from the root.

Flowers -- Yellow sunflower type about 2 inches wide.



Flowers have yellow rays and look like little sunflowers. They are borne singly at end of stem (xl).

Grains -- Smooth, hairless, 4 angled.

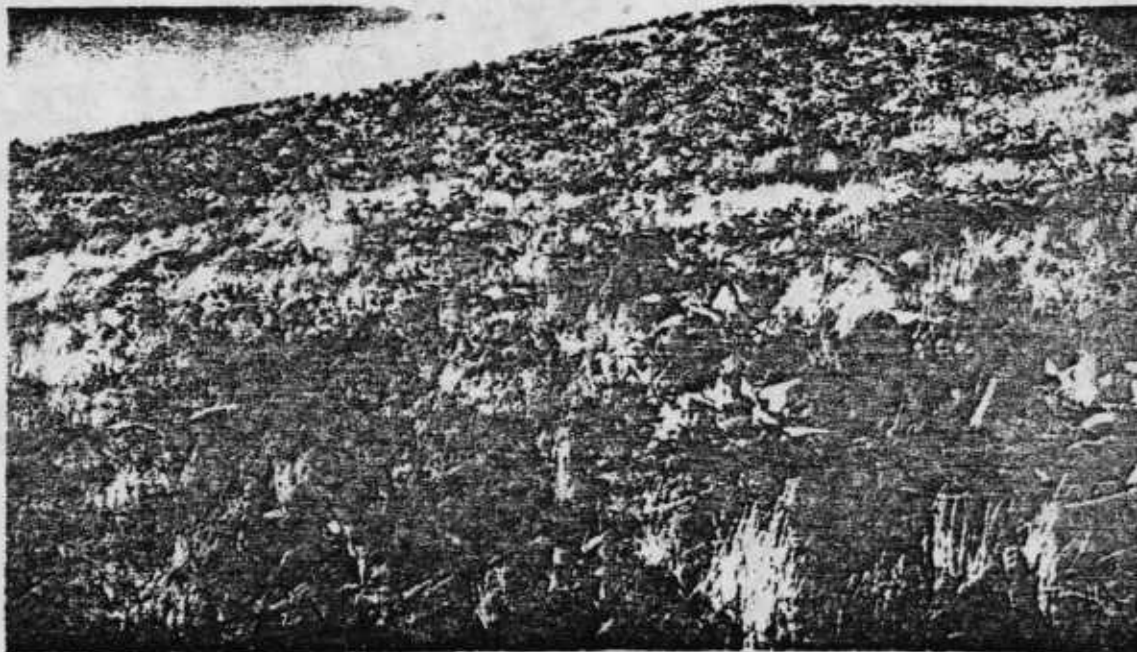
Stems -- Flowers on stems that have only very small leaves.

Roots -- Taproot with a turpentine odor. The centers are good to eat. The taproot grows larger and larger with age until it reaches several inches in diameter.

How does it spread? -- Entirely by seeds.

Other names -- Sunflower, gray dock, bread root.

Does it look like other plants? Several species of balsamroot look about alike. Wyethia (Mules Ears), could be confused with Arrowleaf balsamroot because of similar growth and yellow flowers. Wyethia leaves are large and long like the ears on a donkey. Balsamroot leaves are smaller and commonly shaped like arrowheads.



Arrowleaf balsamroot grows on open hillsides where drainage is good. Its attractive yellow flowers help to beautify many otherwise rather bare looking hills.