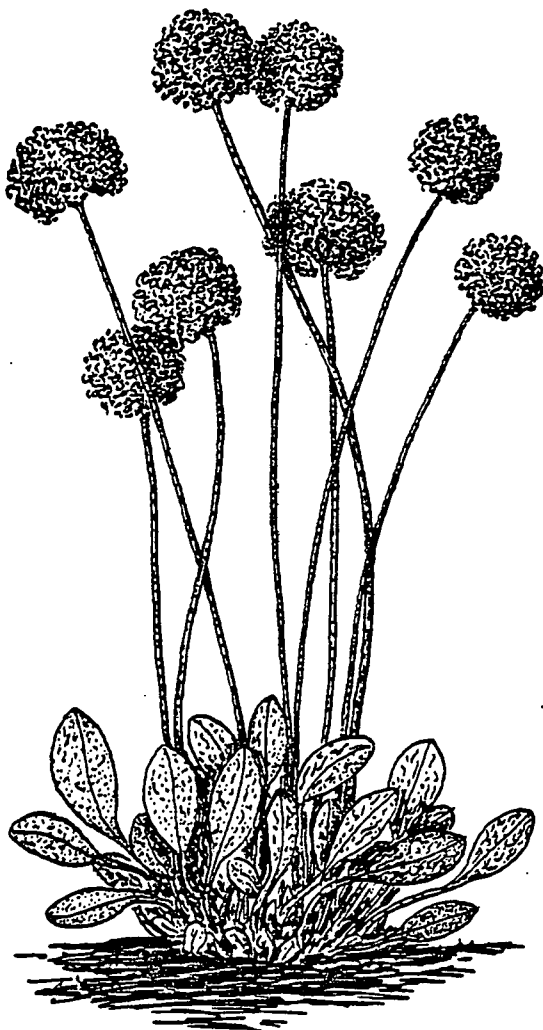


## Cushion Eriogonum or Wild Buckwheat

(Eriogonum ovalifolium)



Wild buckwheat has attractive ball-shaped flower heads borne singly on woolly stems (x1/2).

cushions of low oval leaves and leafless flower stalks are distinctive. Flower heads are ball-shaped.

### Description:

Length of life -- Perennial.

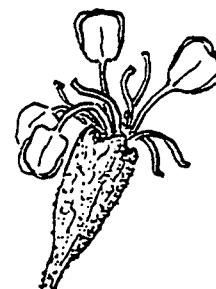
Height -- Usually 6 to 8 inches, only an inch or 2 at high elevations.

Where does it grow? Many species of eriogonum are widespread over eastern Oregon, and some grow in western Oregon. Cushion eriogonum is common throughout the high desert or high altitude sagebrush area of eastern Oregon. It occurs on dry, open hillsides in association with big sagebrush and sun-loving grasses and weeds. There are many other kinds of eriogonum in Oregon, nearly all with woody stems at the base and leafless flower stems. Cushion eriogonum has been chosen because it is probably most common.

Is it important? Most wild buckwheats have thick leaves that are often woolly, and livestock do not care for woolly vegetation. Cushion eriogonum is used some by sheep on lambing ranges and during the winter. They eat the flower stalks and seed heads. It is not considered an important forage plant on Oregon ranges, though it often makes considerable cover on thin rocky soils, so helps in preventing erosion.

What does it look like? Cushion eriogonum forms dense mats with leaves close to the ground, hence the name, cushion. Flower stems are leafless and flowers at the tips may be white or light yellow or pink and through the reds to dark wine red.

Silver gray



Seeds are covered, small, and resemble buckwheat seeds (x4).

Growth habit -- Woody stems at base with basal leaves in mat-like cushion.

Growth period -- Begins growth in early spring and flowers in late spring.

How does it spread? -- By seed. The cushions spread out and may be 2 feet in diameter.

Leaves -- Silver gray, with football-shaped leaf blades, leaves all basal, woolly blades about 3/4 inch long. Leaf stems about twice as long as the blades. Edges of leaf smooth or very slightly wavy. Midvein prominent and lighter color.

Flower heads -- Ball-shaped; flower stems are woolly, unbranched, and bear the balls of flowers at the tops; flowers have no true petals, the color coming from the calyx.

Seed -- Small, triangular, like buckwheat, enclosed in covering.

Branches -- Dark brown or nearly black, are branched and rebranched and hug the ground. They are woody and have a shredded appearance, much like bark of sagebrush.

Other names -- There is no widely used common name for eriogonum, although some species, such as cigarette plant, have a common name. Cushion eriogonum is sometimes called silver eriogonum, or oval leaf eriogonum. Incorrectly called straw flower.

Does it look like anything else? Few plants resemble buckwheat. The bunched silver gray basal leaves and naked flower branches that persist into late fall are typical of this species on sagebrush ranges. The flower heads somewhat resemble those of everlasting, and like the everlasting flowers may be picked and used for long-lasting bouquets. The stems of true everlasting have leaves up the stem to the flower cluster, whereas the wild buckwheat stems have no leaves.