



native plant society of bc

Corylus cornuta (beaked hazelnut)

Meaning: *Corylus* is the Latin word for "hazel". *Cornuta* is Latin for "horned" referring to the long beaklike involucre on the fruit.

Description: Beaked hazelnut is deciduous and can be a small tree or shrub, from 1-6 m tall. In BC, beaked hazelnut usually has several stems coming from a single root crown. The leaves are alternate, 4-10 cm long, elliptical to oval in shape. They're paler on the underside than they are on the top. In autumn, the leaves turn yellow. The flowers are catkins -- the male catkins are pale yellow, long and drooping, the female catkins are small and are recognizable by the bright red stigmas.

Habitat: Grows in mesic to dry forest edges and in the understory of open woodlands and forests in the lowland and montane zones. In BC, there are two varieties of *Corylus cornuta* -- var. *cornuta* is common in southwestern BC east of the Cascade Mountains, var. *californica* is frequent on southern Vancouver Island and the lower Fraser Valley, becoming rare the farther east one goes.

Range: Beaked hazelnut is native to southern Canada and the United States. It occurs from BC east to Newfoundland and south to California, Colorado, Mississippi, and South Carolina.

Wildlife notes: Lots of birds (e.g. Steller's jays) and small mammals (e.g. Douglas squirrels) eat the nuts. Some birds also feed on the catkins as an early spring food. Beavers, moose and elk will browse on the plant. Birds and small mammals also use beaked hazelnut for cover.

Other notes: Although the nuts are edible for people, wildlife usually get them first. Beaked hazelnuts are also used in the nut-growing industry to produce disease- and cold-resistant cultivars.

First Nations use: Numerous First Nations used beaked hazelnut in numerous ways. The nuts were eaten -- and used in trade. The wood was used to make tools, fish traps and baby carriers, among other things. The leaves, bark and roots were also used medicinally for a wide range of ailments.

Gardening use: Beaked hazelnut is a terrific choice for native plant gardeners. It is available at many nurseries, or can be grown from seed or cuttings. For more information about propagation, see:

- *Propagation of Pacific Northwest Native Plants* by Robin Rose et al.
- *USDA Plant Guide* (online) at http://plants.usda.gov/plantguide/pdf/pg_acci.pdf



Photo: Dawn Hanna