

WACD PLANT MATERIALS CENTER

16564 Bradley Road, Bow WA 98232

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Silk Tassel (*Garrya elliptica*)

Distribution

Silk tassel is native from Southwestern Oregon to Southern California up to 2,500 feet on dry north facing slopes and ridges in chaparral and mixed evergreen forests, as well as coastal bluffs. Coast silk tassel grows in shaded canyons and up to 7,000 feet in the Coast Ranges.

Growth Habit

Erect evergreen shrub with dense, glossy gray-green leaves that can grow 10-15 feet in height. The tough leathery leaves have a waxy convex form with wavy leaf margins. Flowers appear in January to February with male and female catkins on separate plants. The showy long, drooping clusters of greenish-white male flowers reach 6-12 inches long. Female plants produce less attractive catkins but bear hairy fruits that turn from light green to dark purple and may persist through the summer if not eaten by birds.

Adaptability

Silt tassel thrives in full sun to partial shade in well-drained moist soil often in coastal conditions. It is moderately drought tolerant and is cold hardy to about 15 degrees Fahrenheit. It grows well with 25 inches of rainfall per year.

Comments

- Early settlers used the bitter tasting leaves as a quinine substitute, which it is also known as quinine bush.
- Can be slow to get started but will accelerate growth once established.
- Beautiful ornamental that can work well as an informal hedge or screen.

