

Low Elevation Forest Tanoak Zone

Evergreen Huckleberry / Púrith / *Vaccinium ovatum*



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Cultural Importance

Púrith is an important food source for the Karuk with many nutritional and health benefits. The berry's high antioxidant content is among the properties that make this plant a medicinal food (Taruscio et al. 2004).

Life Cycle & Habitat

This understory shrub is found in coastal forests and mountains of the Pacific Northwest and northern California, and is most abundant in forests that have a higher level of canopy cover. New leaves and flowers emerge in spring, followed by fruit that develops in summer and fully ripens by fall. While this slow-growing, shade-tolerant species depends

on a mostly covered filtered light understory habitat, flower and berry production increases with light and soil moisture in the presence of forest gaps produced by moderate disturbance related to fire, timber harvest, or thinning (Lake 2015).

Púrith and Fire

Púrith is adapted to some disturbance including fire, but its slower reproductive tendencies make it more vulnerable to climate change than other huckleberry species (Lake 2015). High intensity fire may open up the forest canopy, increasing light and limiting moisture, factors that could lead to this species being outcompeted by others that thrive in drier, sunnier conditions.

Effects of High Severity Fire Across Time

Immediate	2-Year	Long-Term
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May strike during flowering and fruiting season, affecting the harvest as well as the plant's ability to seed Direct removal of foliage (wildlife habitat) and berries (food) by fire 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An open canopy resulting from high severity fire may reduce the abundance of púrith by creating drier, sunnier conditions in which it may be outcompeted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Although, fire adapted with burl/lignotuber resprouting capacity, increased severity of fires can reduce re-establishment vigor and site dominance.
Sources:	Sources: Lake 2015	Sources:

Effects of Karuk Cultural Burning Across Time

Immediate	2-Year	Long-Term
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can take into account plant's life cycle and avoids burning important cultural patches when plants are flowering and fruiting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plant abundance is maintained by preserving much of the canopy, while still promoting forest gaps that enhance flower and fruit production Soil nutrients are enhanced 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintenance of productive huckleberry patches across the landscape among different soil and aspect types.
Sources:	Sources: Lake 2015, Vance et al. 2001	Sources: Lake 2013

Effects of Federal Fire Management Strategies on Species' Climate Change and Fire Resilience

Prior to Fire	During Fire	After Fire
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fire suppression increases high intensity fire risk and reduces forest gaps that assist flowering and fruiting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fire suppression actions, fire line construction can temporarily reduce tribal/wildlife foraging of berries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Salvage logging may contribute to a highly lit understory that compromises huckleberry habitat
Sources:	Sources:	Sources: