

People, Plants, and Places

Landscapes are more than storehouses of the things people need to survive. Landscapes also symbolize people's understanding of their place in the world. People discover who they are by learning about the places where their ancestors lived. Traditional ecological knowledge about native plants—expressed through oral histories, songs, origin stories, and family traditions—connects people to the landscapes that are important to their

communities. Visiting and learning about special places like La Botica can teach people who they are, help them manage the present, and plan for the future.

Today, the San Luis Valley remains important to many Indigenous groups and local communities. For Ute people, it is a part of Núuchiu Tuvvup, or traditional Ute lands. Pueblo people—visitors to the San Luis Valley for more than 1,000

years—regularly return to obtain minerals and culturally significant plants. Navajos, Jicarilla Apaches, Comanches, and other groups continue to make use of the Valley's abundant natural resources. Hispano people, who first came to the Valley during the 1830s, continue to gather wild plants for medicines, edible greens, and other uses. For all of these people, the Valley's native plant resources remain important cultural touchstones.

Not Only Food and Medicine...

In addition to their culinary and therapeutic values, native plants were important for craft production, cosmetics, dyes, ritual practice, and many other uses. This sandal was made from yucca fibers.



Fibers from yucca leaves were also used to make nets, twine, and baskets. The leaves, roots, and seeds of many different plants were used to make dyes. Tools, toys, soaps, containers, and many other products were made from native plants and trees.



**View Exhibit
Online**

Major funding for this exhibit was provided by a History Colorado – State Historical Fund grant (2021-M2-007). Additional funding was provided by the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area and the Colorado State Land Board. The exhibit was designed and produced by Paleocultural Research Group (PCRG) (paleocultural.org). PCRG gratefully acknowledges the expertise of the many contributors to the La Botica ethnobotany project. Greg Harlin created the backdrop illustration (wrh-illustration.com).

Images: Threelobed Sumac–Sean O’Meara; Indian Ricegrass–Bill Gorum/Alamy Stock Photo; Narrowleaf Yucca–Patrick Myers/NPS/Wikimedia Commons; Pinon Pine–John Fowler/Wikimedia Commons; Chokecherry–NPS/Wikimedia Commons; Rose Hips–Joe Mabel/Wikimedia Commons; Sandal–Kimberly Spurr/Museum of Northern Arizona (Sand Dune Cave, NA7523. N25-26.1, reproduced with permission from the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Bureau of Reclamation). Quoted material from: Betsy Chappoose, Sally McBeth, Sally Crum, and Aline LaForge, “Planting a Seed: Ute Ethnobotany, A Collaborative Approach in Applied Anthropology,” *The Applied Anthropologist*, vol. 32, no. 1, p. 3, 2012.