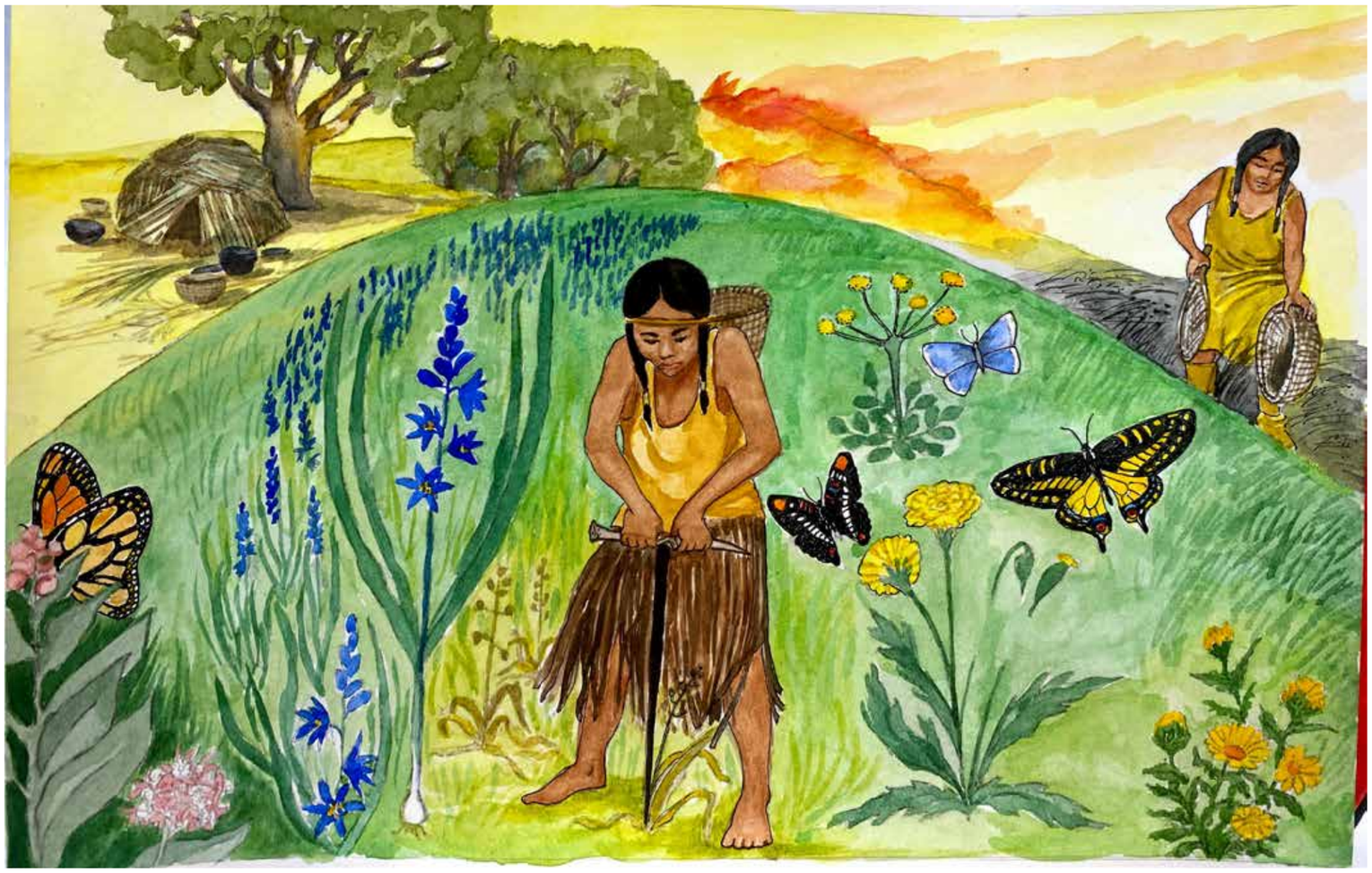
Kalapuya Culture and Wetland Plants

Westmoreland Park has two wetland prairies on the east and west sides of the park. Wetland prairies were once abundant throughout the Willamette Valley and these two wetland prairie remnants have survived urban growth and development. They've persisted even through use of the first Eugene Airport (1919-1943) located here in what is now Westmoreland Park.

The Willamette Wetlands of the Kalapuya mural, painted on the east side of the Dr. Edwin Coleman, Jr. Community Center, shows a Kalapuya elder and storyteller sharing cultural history and stories across the generations.

It is a seasonal round, an annual cycle of storytelling; gathering plants for their roots, seeds and fibers; and celebrating the gifts of nature through ceremony.

You can discover plants that are uniquely suited to wetland soils. Look on the back of this sign and in the adjacent prairies to learn more about these native plants and their traditional uses.



Westmoreland Signage Project Partners
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Plant Illustrations and Notes
Gabrielle Bird

Kalapuya Elder and Consultant
Esther Stutzman

Mural Artist
Susan Applegate

Learn more on the back side of this kiosk.

Scan for more information

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Wetlands are important to the Kalapuya People who have always lived on these lands and use many wetlands plants for food, medicine, basketry, ceremony and relationships. In the sections below, Kalapuyan names in the Santiam dialect are noted in **bold font** and scientific names are *italicized*.

Barestem Biscuitroot | **Alu't**
Lomatium nudicaule

Plant Profile: The tiny yellow flowers of Barestem Biscuitroot are clustered together into showy heads. This perennial plant relies on energy stored in a tap root to survive difficult conditions, such as drought.

Ethnobotany: All parts of Biscuitroot have important uses. When burned, the seeds have a strong aromatic fragrance that is a central part of sacred ceremonies for some tribes. In early spring, the soft, new leaves and stalks can be eaten raw or cooked in earth ovens. The roots have medicinal properties and are used to treat colds and sore throats. Careful harvesting is practiced to prevent overharvest of this useful plant.

Common Camas | **Andip**
Camassia quamash

Plant Profile: In early spring, the six-petaled blue-purple flowers of Common Camas can be found in moist meadows across western Oregon. An underground bulb provides the plant with the nutrients and energy it needs to flourish.

Ethnobotany: Many Native American tribes across the Pacific Northwest traditionally harvest the Camas bulb when the flowers have died back in the summer. Waiting gives the Camas flowers the time they need to pollinate and spread seeds across the prairie. This patience allows the harvesters to support future Camas populations and maintain the prairie's health. The bulbs are cooked in earth ovens. When they are soft, they can be mashed and eaten right away, or flattened into cakes to be kept over winter. The uncooked bulbs can be stored for many months.

Common Rush | **Amúštal**
Juncus effusus ssp. pacificus

Plant Profile: Rushes resemble grasses and grow in clumps or colonies in wetlands. They have small brown flowers that grow near the top of the stems..

Ethnobotany: Many Native American tribes across the Pacific Northwest traditionally harvest rushes as a weaving material. Rushes are used to make woven straps for cradle boards and pack baskets, and rope for berry baskets. They are one of the materials used to weave identifying tribal design patterns in hats and baskets, sometimes in combination with cattail leaves and beargrass.

Fire supports biodiversity

Camas is harvested and baked in earth ovens as a modern cultural practice for many Native American tribes across the Pacific Northwest.

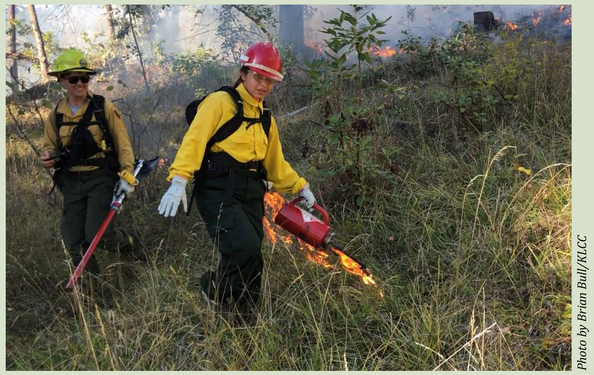

Photo by Brian Bull/KLCC

Fire plays a critical role in the traditional Kalapuyan cycle of tending and gathering wild foods that sustain cultural practice and connect people to the land.

Kalapuyan fire practitioners traditionally use fire to manage wetland prairie ecosystems. Most burning takes place in late summer, after harvest, to clean and prepare the land for the next year.

Fire maintains the open prairie landscape, reduces plant debris, and lays down ash, adding nutrients to the soil.

Wetland plants that benefit from burning include important seed and root crops such as camas, biscuitroot, tarweed, and mule's ears. The judicious use of fire also promotes the growth of basketry materials, such as rushes and sedges.

Narrowleaf Mule's Ears | **Uamelk Tepok**
Wyethia angustifolia

Plant Profile: Sunflower-like in appearance, Narrowleaf Mule's Ears can be seen blooming in uplands and shallow wetlands through spring and summer. Its large, yellow flowers grow up to 3 inches in diameter, attracting many important pollinators.

Ethnobotany: Indigenous Tribes across western Oregon harvest Mule's Ears for its nutritious seeds. The seeds can be roasted and baked into bread or boiled for mush or soup. They provide nutrition through the winter if they are pounded into flour or meal with other herbs and grasses.

Tarweed | **Tukwa**
Madia sp.

Plant Profile: The annual Tarweeds have large buds that open to small, light yellow flowers, and leaves covered with fine hairs. As they begin to flower, the aromatic, oily, sticky coating on their leaves, stems and buds make them easy to identify.

Ethnobotany: Following a prairie burn, women traditionally harvested the seeds by knocking them off the plants into a gathering basket. The seeds can be stored year-round and are used to make meal or flour with other nuts and seeds such as hazelnuts or sunflower seeds. Oils from Tarweed are spread on the skin during ceremonies. The oil is also used for cooking, and for making a bar-like food without the intense sugar that Europeans introduced.

Scan the QR code to learn more about these plants

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