

# Antelope Bitterbrush



Scientific name: *Purshia tridentata* (Pursh) DC.

Common names: Antelope bitterbrush, Bitterbrush, Antelope brush, Quinine brush, Deer brush

Antelope bitterbrush is an important browse species for many animals. It is common in sagebrush, mountain brush and juniper communities up to about 9500 ft elevation throughout the west. Antelope bitterbrush is a hardy shrub that can grow up to 2 meters tall but is most often found in shorter growth forms, sometimes spreading prostrate across the ground.



Antelope bitterbrush is a member of the Rose family (Rosaceae). Its cream to light-yellow colored flowers grow solitary on the ends of short branches throughout the plant, blooming late spring to early summer. The petals are easily deciduous. Bitterbrush plants are well adapted for dry conditions and often live to be decades old. The small, thick, semi-evergreen leaves resist water loss by rolling inward during the heat of the day. Leaves grow up to 2 cm long and have three lobes or teeth on their tips (thus the species name 'tridentata' meaning 'three-toothed').



Although the leaves have a bitter taste, this plant is a highly palatable, high value browse species. Wildlife and livestock (rarely horses) eat bitterbrush year-round, and for deer especially, it is a critical winter browse. The plant provides cover and the seeds are an important nutrition source for small mammals and birds. All parts of the plant were used medicinally by Native Americans.

