

## ***Rubus parviflorus*, Thimbleberry**

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### **General Botanical Characteristics**

*Rubus parviflorus*, commonly known as Thimbleberry for the small “thimble” shaped berries it produces, is a low scrambling or upright deciduous shrub ranging in height from 1 to 8 feet. They can be identified by their large green unevenly serrated leaves, which are pale underneath, and the succulent fruit that turns red to scarlet when ripe. They have adapted well to fire and reestablish after burns through seed banking and rhizome sprouting.

### **Seasonal Development**

Thimbleberry growth varies with elevation and weather conditions. It generally leafs out in mid to late Spring. However, buds may become active by late February in parts of Oregon and Washington. Leaves begin to fall in late summer to autumn. Leaf fall may be early in dry years. In Oregon, leaves shed by late August in particularly dry years.



### **Distribution/Habitat**

Thimbleberry is found from Alaska to California and into northern Mexico, and east to the Great Lakes States. It commonly grows on open, wooded hillsides, along stream banks and canyons, on borders, and roadsides. Thimbleberry typically becomes established in disturbed sites and distribution declines with succession.



### **Interesting Facts**

- The fruit was a staple for indigenous inhabitants throughout its range. The fruit was eaten fresh in summer and dried for winter use.
- The bark was boiled and made into soap, and leaves were used to make a medicinal tea.
- Leaves were powdered and applied to burns to minimize scarring.

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### **References**

Rook, Earl. Plants of the North, November 2002,  
<http://www.rook.org/earl/bwca/nature/shrubs/rubuspar.html>

US Forest Service Shrub Database, November 2002,  
<http://www.fs.fed.us/database/feis/plants/shrub/>