

At our meeting on March 8th, Laura Giard asked me why I volunteered to be the Endangered Herb Watch Dog. After some thought, I realized I had two strong convictions. One is that I could justify buying more plants. After writing the article on ginseng, I realized the strong necessity to cultivate the non-endangered substitute Siberian Ginseng. So after finding only one source with potted plants being Horizon Herbs in Washington State, I wanted to make the shipping cost worthwhile. For me that meant buying more plants and seeds.

The other reason is I love the resources available with Google Scholar. I enjoy books in the public domain that are now at least 100 years old. There is an incredible wealth of knowledge and a different way of looking at the world. With herbs I find this information very enlightening and useful. I feel like we are learning great and valuable knowledge from our ancestors.

Chris Marano mentioned *Lomatium* in his presentation at Fruitlands and I chose this plant to study in depth with a drawing exercise and scholarly endeavor. With regards to flu prevention, Chris is trying to use local and common plants instead of threatened and non-native plants. *Lomatium dissectum* is defined as an at-risk plant by United Plant Savers. From investigation I am in awe of the potency of this herb and now support preservation efforts. Identifying this plant is tricky since there are 70 to 80 *Lomatium* species and 20 poorly defined species appear in the ethnobotanical literature. The ideal climate is rocky, well drained, and fertile soil in the Western United States. The plant is long-lived in colonies. Seeds production begins at four years and is dependent on bee pollination. Large roots from established plants have been harvested over the centuries for food and medicine as shown by the attached images from historical texts. My detective work suggests that *Peucedanum farinosum* is the same plant as *Lomatium dissectum*.

5. *Peucedanum farinosum* (biscuit-root, couse). In the country bordering the Columbia and in Northern California there are many plants which belong to the umbelliferous genus *Peucedanum*, some with yellow and a few with white flowers. The foliage is much dissected, sometimes capillary like that of the fennel. Among these is one which has a round or oblong, white, farinaceous root somewhat like a small parsnip. It is called couse, or biscuit-root, by the Oregon Indians, and is quite an important source of food among them. It is gathered and dried for winter use, is then ground between stones to a kind of flour, and of this a palatable and nutritious cake is made. It is also sometimes boiled with meat.

EDIBLE TUBERS, BULBS OR ROOTS

C. and R. (the skelaps of the Spokanes); *P. Geyeri*, Wats.; *P. ambiguum*, T. and G., *P. cous*, Wats. (the cow-as of the Indians). The tubers may be consumed raw and in that state have a celery flavor. The most usual method of use among the Indians, however, was to remove the rind, dry the inside portion, and pulverise it. The flour would then be mixed with water, flattened into cakes and dried in the sun or baked. These cakes, according to Palmer,³ were customarily about half an inch thick but a yard long by a foot wide, with a hole in the middle, by which they could be tied to the saddle of the traveler. The taste of such cakes is rather like stale biscuits. On



BISCUIT-ROOT
(*Pseudodanum* Sp.)

³Edward Palmer, "Food Products of the North American Indians," Ann. Rept. U. S. Dept. Agriculture, 1876,

There is renewed interest in *Lomatium dissectum* relative to concerns about a potential world-wide pandemic flu outbreak. Supposedly, with the Spanish flu epidemic in 1918, Native Americans survived by consuming this plant as a medicinal. Lomatium.com is an informative website on the plant's ethnobotanical history and taxonomic complexity. Modern research has confirmed the root's strong anti-viral properties. As herbalists we should be alarmed since this plant could easily become extinct with zealous overharvesting. A 2012 publication explains some details about cultivation of this plant from seed. The authors acknowledge that they know of no other efforts at cultivation of this important plant.

My personal goal is to source some seeds of this plant and attempt to grow the plant in my garden. I will let you know the outcome.

By Abbie White April 27, 2014