

***Whipplea modesta* Torr.**
yerba de selva
Hydrangeaceae (Hydrangea Family)

Status: State Review Group 1
Rank: G4SNR

General Description: Adapted from Hitchcock et al. (1961) and Hickman (1993): *Whipplea modesta* is a sub-shrub with woody stems that trail and freely root on the ground, from which arise erect flowering branches up to 3 in. (8 cm) tall. The bark is gray-brown and peels in narrow strips. The leaves are in pairs, semi-deciduous but often persistent, somewhat sessile, ovate to elliptic, and have short, stiff hairs with a bulbous base. The leaf blades are ½ to 1 ½ in. (1.5-4 cm) long, and 3/8 to more than 1 in. (1-3 cm) wide. The odorless white flowers are in tight clusters at the tips of the shoots. Each inflorescence has 4 to 12 flowers that are about 3/16 in. (4-6 mm) wide and have 4-6 oval petals. There are 4-6 leafy bracts beneath each of the flowers that are 1/16 in. (1.5-2 mm) long and mostly hairless. The fruit is depressed-rounded with 4 or 5 distinct segments that separate and have one plump, honey-comb-pitted seed per chamber.

Identification Tips: *Whipplea modesta* is the only species of its genus. It can be distinguished from the other genus of the hydrangea family in Washington, *Philadelphus*, by its trailing, woody stems, while species of *Philadelphus* are erect shrubs up to 10 feet (3 m) tall.

Phenology: This species flowers from April to June throughout its range, and has been seen in bloom in Washington in early May.

Range: *Whipplea modesta* is found from Washington to central California. In Washington, this species is only known from Clallam County.

Habitat: This species is usually found in open or shady places, on dry and rocky slopes, in "balds", and in coniferous forest at less than 4600 feet (1400 m). The elevation at which the occurrences were found in Washington was less than 1500 feet (460 m). Associated species found in Clallam County include Oregon gooseberry (*Ribes lobbii*), Scouler's willow (*Salix scouleriana*), Saskatoon service-berry (*Amelanchier alnifolia*), red bearberry (*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*), pacific madrone (*Arbutus menziesii*), salal (*Gaultheria shallon*), hybrid bearberry (*Arctostaphylos media*), oceanspray (*Holodiscus discolor*), and Oregon boxwood (*Pachistima myrsinites*).

Ecology: *Whipplea modesta* occurs in mature forest communities

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Known distribution of
Whipplea modesta
in Washington



● Current (1980+)
○ Historic (older than 1980)

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throughout its southern range, but on the Olympic Peninsula this species is found only in south-facing balds.

State Status Comments: This species is known in Washington from less than five occurrences. Because *Whipplea modesta* was recently added to the Washington rare plant list, not much is known about the degree of its rarity in the state at this time.

Inventory Needs: South-facing balds in the Olympic Mountains should be investigated.

Threats and Management Concerns: The greatest threats to this species are habitat disturbance by road construction and recreational use.

References:

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