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Mules Ears

Smooth (Wyethia amplexicalis)
Woolly (Wyethia mollis)

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Where does it grow? Mules Ears Wyethia is a common range plant in eastern Oregon. It grows on flats and open glades in patches, in areas of sage, bunchgrass, browse, and trees, especially in places wet in the spring. Wyethia likes heavy, good soil and tends to shy away from rocky, sandy, desert areas.

Is it important? Fairly important forage early in the season. It gets tough and useless as summer comes on. The flower heads are good forage and leaves are eaten when young and tender. Indians once used the roots for food.

What does it look like? Usually it is a bunch of large leaves near the ground with yellow flowers on individual stems. It can be 1 foot or 2 feet tall. There are many similar types. All have leaves shaped like a mule's ear. They

Wyethia Mules Ears is a member of the sunflower family. It is a perennial with big leaves shaped as the name indicates.

are dark green and tough or waxy. One type is smooth and another woolly.

Description:

Length of life -- Long-lived perennial.

Height -- 1 to 3 feet.

Season -- Early flowering weed, dries brittle like paper.

Leaves -- Large basal leaves shaped long as big mules' ears. The leaves on the stems are smaller, but with the same shape.

Flowers -- Sunflower-like with yellow rays 1 or 2 inches long, about a dozen rays to the head.



Mules Ears Wyethia grows in patches on open meadows, usually where soil is quite wet in the spring. Picture taken in Fox Valley, Grant County.

FEDERAL COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE OREGON STATE COLLEGE CORVALLIS

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Root -- Taproot is thick, woody, deep set, will stand heavy trampling.

Other names -- Green dock, mountain Wyethia, sunflower.

Does it look like other plants? It is a member of the sunflower family and may resemble other sunflowers. It especially looks like balsamroot. Wyethia has leaves along the flower stem. These leaves are the same shape as the basal leaves, but smaller. Balsamroot has only tiny leaves on the stem or none at all. Early dock and mullein leaves could resemble Wyethia leaves on some plants.