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Rubber Rabbitbrush

(Gray rabbitbrush)
(Chrysothamnus nauseosus)

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Where does it grow? This plant is found in most of the semi-arid sections of Oregon east of the Cascade Mountains. It occurs predominantly on sandy and pumice coarse-textured soils at medium elevations. It also occurs in the southwestern part of the state in drier areas of the Siskiyou foothills and the Rogue-Umpqua valleys. Rabbitbrush commonly grows with sagebrush. In many areas where the rangeland has deteriorated or where repeated burning has occurred, rabbitbrush may dominate the area.

Is it important? It is not important as a forage species. It is important because of its abundance. It has become very important in disturbed areas since it readily invades such areas. It has replaced forage species that have not been able to withstand repeated disturbances. Animals do not graze this plant unless feed is extremely short.

Its non-palatability is credited to the latex found in the leaves. This latex gives the plant its name since rubber can be made from it.

What does it look like? Rubber rabbitbrush has a very stout woody base from which arise numerous flexible branches. The young stems and leaves are coated with a dense, matted, woolly covering of fine, short white hairs which give the shrub its characteristic grayish color. The shrub is often called gray rabbitbrush because of its grayish appearance.

Description:

Length of Life--Long-lived perennial.

Height--Usually $1\frac{1}{2}$ to $3\frac{1}{2}$ feet but has been as high as 7 feet.

Growth Period--Leaf growth takes place from May to June. Flower

buds form from late June to the middle of July. The yellow flowers

bloom during August. Seeds mature during September and October.

Leaves-- $\frac{1}{2}$ to $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches long, $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ inch wide. Covered with fine white hairs.

Seed--Angled, hairy, crowned by a ring of straight soft, white hairs.

Roots--This plant has a long taproot. Unlike its associates big sagebrush and green rabbitbrush, it does not have lateral roots close to the surface. Consequently, it does not compete as severely for surface water and is better adapted for using sub-surface water.

How does it spread?--It sprouts vigorously from the root crown and is a very prolific seeder.

Other names--Gray rabbitbrush.

Does it look like anything else? This plant is often mistaken for broom snakeweed. However, broom snakeweed is a half-shrub and blooms early in the growing season. Gray rabbitbrush is a shrub and blooms in the fall.