Gambel Oak (Scrub Oak)









Quercus gambelii

ROCKY MOUNTAIN RELATIVES

None

EASY IDENTIFICATION

Unique leaf; acorns in fall; grow on hot, dry hillsides



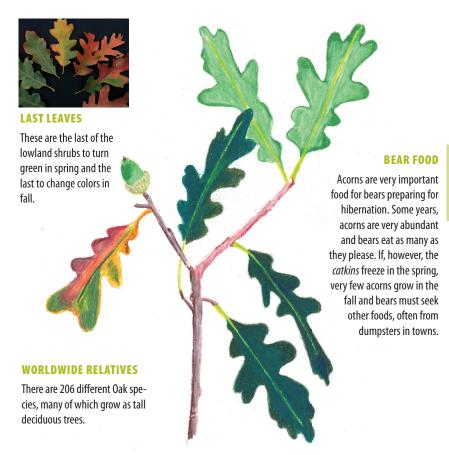
Leaf Gambel Oak leaves are easy to idenify with their gently curving *lobed* shape.



BIG AND SMALL Gambel Oaks vary in size from dense shrubby thickets to 20-foot tall trees with trunks as thick as an adult's thigh and a leafy canopy that hangs over an adult's head. The dense thickets are created by cloning (one thicket growing from a single root system), from deer and elk grazing (see "clumping" below) and from growing in areas where water quickly evaporates or drains downhill. The taller trees occur in unburned areas and in flat meadows where water is able to settle into the soil.

FIRE RESISTANT ROOTS Forest fires burn frequently through Scrub Oak thickets, especially in October and November when dried leaves remain on the branches or collect on the ground. These fires burn quickly through a grove, but do not burn long enough in one area to get too hot. If the roots do not burn, new oak shrubs will grow immediately from the unharmed roots.

CLUMPING Dense oak thickets often look like they've been trimmed to one height. Gambel Oak branches are a favorite winter food for deer and elk and a herd can trim an entire hillside in one winter. When the tips of the branches are cut, the next year's growth occurs outward from the stem, rather than growing longer from the tip. The effect is a clump of growth at the top of each branch which creates a very dense thicket too thick to walk through.





Fire Following a fire, new growth occurs quickly from unharmed roots.



Acorns Acorns grow in late summer and are an important food for bears and rodents.



