



Dogbane

Pinoleville Pomo Nation

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Common and Scientific Names

Dogbane is the common name of the plant: *Apocynum cannabinum*. In Latin, *Apocynum* means “Away dog!” and *cannabinum* means “hemp like”.

What does it look like?

Dogbane has thin reddish stems that grow in spindly clumps up to three feet tall. When dogbane is cut, the stems ooze a thick, milky liquid. The leaves of Dogbane grow opposite from one another, and sometimes three or more leaves grow in from one place. Dogbane leaves are shaped like a spear-point, and have smooth edges.



On the top the leaves are smooth and waxy; underneath they have downy white hairs. Tiny white, cup shaped flowers are in clusters at the top of stems. Dogbane flowers in late spring through the summer. Many small insects, such as bees and flies, pollinate the flowers. Dogbane seeds have white hairs and are found in two, long thin pods that hang downward.

Where is Dogbane found?

Dogbane habitat is found in moist areas, near rivers or streams, or along ditches. Warning! Dogbane is poisonous when fresh. Do not try to make string with fresh Dogbane!

Making Cordage

Preparing Dogbane for cordage

Preparing dogbane for cordage was an important process. If the material was not properly prepared then the cordage could not be tightly twined into sturdy cordage. In the late fall or early winter dogbane with tall straight stalks was located and gathered. A sharp tool or knife was used to carefully scrape off the thin, red bark.

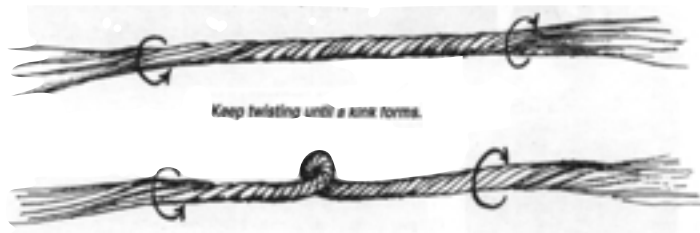
The stalk was cracked open between thumbs and fingers almost



to the end. The bits of pith were removed from the fibers by shaking the fibers and scraping them with fingernails. The fibers were gently rubbed to separate them from each other. The fibers were ready to be twined into cordage. Once the plant fibers had been prepared, the making of cordage could be done. There are two methods for making the fibers into cordage. One method was twining, or twisting, the fibers into string. Twining was done with fibers such as dogbane, sagebrush, milkweed, and willow.

Finger Twining

1. A bundle of plant fiber half the thickness as the finished cordage was prepared.
2. Both hands were placed one third from the ends of the fiber bundle. There would be six to twelve inches of fiber between the hands.
3. The fiber bundle was twisted (twined), in a clockwise direction, using both hands. Twisting the fibers tightly made a single, even strand of cordage.
4. After twisting, a kink would form in the middle of the strand.



4. As the twisting continued, the kink brought the single strand together and made a double cord.
5. Twining the fibers in a clockwise direction produced an S-twist to the strand. Twining the fibers in a counter-clock-wise direction produced a Z-twist.

