

# NEWS

## BOISE NATIONAL FOREST

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Agriculture

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### **New Plant Species Named after Sacajawea Found in Boise NF**

Boise, Idaho - A species new to science -- Sacajawea's bitterroot (*Lewisia sacajawea*) is the first plant species to be named in honor of Sacajawea.

An Idaho native, this rare and beautiful plant occurs nowhere else in the world but central Idaho. Just over two dozen populations of Sacajawea's bitterroot are known to exist — roughly 75 percent of them on the Boise National Forest. Scattered populations also occur on the Payette, Sawtooth, and Salmon-Challis National Forests.

A high country resident, Sacajawea's bitterroot can be found in montane and subalpine habitats ranging from 5,000 to 9,500 feet. The plant is dormant most of the year, but shortly after snowmelt, a rosette of succulent leaves emerges, followed by showy white flowers that hug the ground. After flowering, all aboveground signs of the plant disappear — with the tuberous carrot-like root hidden just below the surface. Its relative, the common bitterroot, *Lewisia rediviva* (Montana's state flower), has similar growth patterns.

The name *Lewisia* was originally developed in 1813 by botanist Frederick Pursh to honor Meriwether Lewis. Although Lewis collected a handful of bitterroot plants during the historic journey, Sacajawea's bitterroot was apparently not one of them.

Sacajawea's bitterroot was not always considered a unique species. It was originally known as Kellogg's bitterroot, also found in California's Sierra Nevada mountains.

Recent research on the plant's genetic and physical characteristics confirmed that the Idaho plants are indeed distinct from the Sierra plants. Sacajawea's bitterroot is smaller than its California relatives, and about half the size of the common bitterroot.

Idahoans can now celebrate both Sacajawea and this unique rare plant named in her honor — 200 years after the Lewis and Clark Expedition! # # #

Photographs of the plant are available electronically in a JPEG format from the information contacts.



Sacajawea's bitterroot (*Lewisia sacajaweana*)