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SQUAW OR BEAR GRASS

Wild flowers are often known by local names which are derived from some of their common uses. Such names may or may not be recorded in the volumes on plant life. This is the case of the squaw or bear grass. If you want to read about it in a text on botany, you will have to look for its technical name, *Xerophyllum*.

Every visitor of the Mt. Hood country who motors along the paved highways or tramps these alpine areas in summertime, can scarcely help seeing the stately shafts from 3 to 5 feet high with a thick oval cluster of yellowish flowers at the top. The plant from the center of which the flower shaft grows is a dense tuft of long, wiry leaves.

In the east, the *Xerophyllum* is grown in gardens and is commonly called turkey's beard. This is a native of the higher western mountains from the Cascades to the Rockies. The squaws of some of the Indian tribes used the wiry leaves for making baskets. Bears sometimes dig up the root stocks for food, and deer are especially fond of the sweet blossoms.