

Artifact of the Month

Tribal Historic Preservation Office

February 2022

Valentine's Day is right around the corner and in order to make sure our readers have it on the calendar we've decided to highlight one of the plants from our herbarium collection. Oak mistletoe (*Phoradendron leucarpum*) is a semi-parasitic shrub with clusters of tiny yellow flowers and green stems. While normally hung around Christmastime, it doesn't seem to embody the joyful happiness that comes with the holiday. Instead, mistletoe derives its name from Greek origins and means "thief tree". This refers to the plant stealing nourishment from the trees on which they grow.

Why highlight this plant during the month of love? Because, recent studies were published that dispel the idea that mistletoe is poisonous. Instead of being poisonous to humans it is now believed to cause gastrointestinal upset if *small* amounts are swallowed.

Now we are not suggesting anyone go out and try mistletoe, but maybe, just maybe, the gastrointestinal upset is similar to the "butterflies" felt when meeting someone for the first time or celebrating years of love on Valentine's Day.

