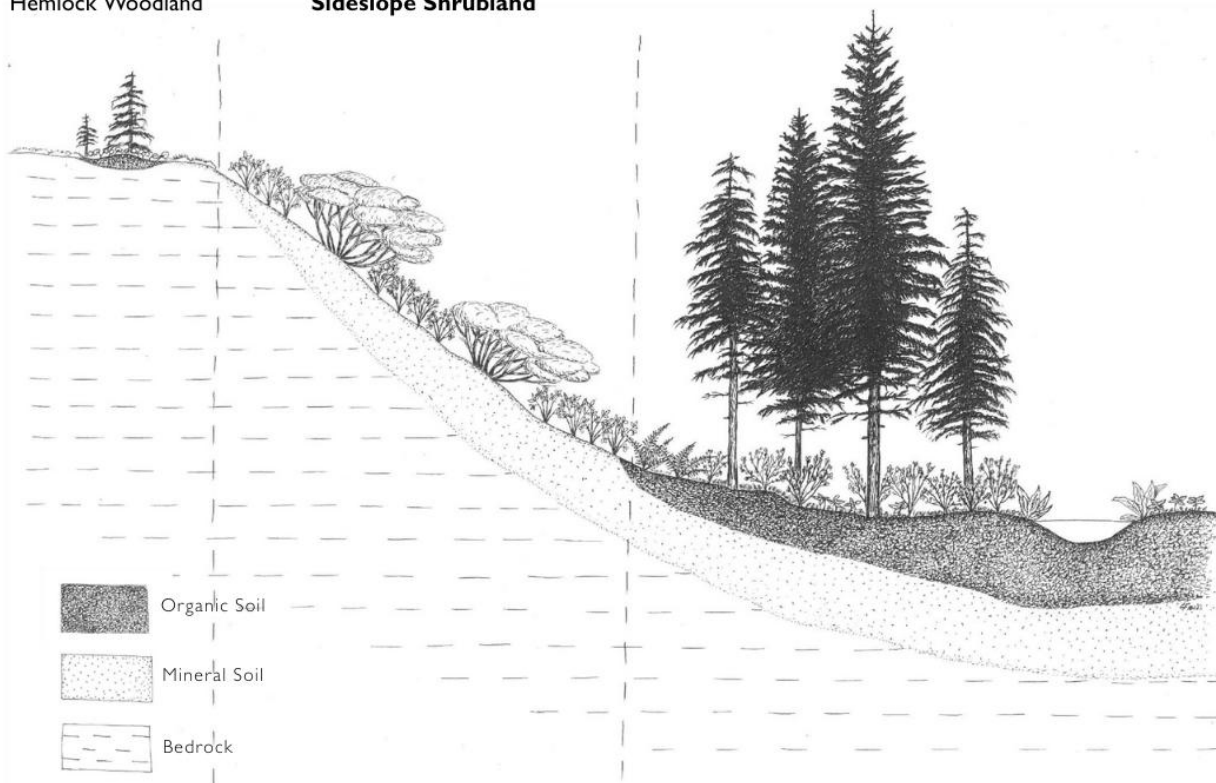


# Sitka Alder – Salmonberry Sideslope Shrubland

Subalpine Mountain  
Hemlock Woodland

**Sitka Alder – Salmonberry  
Sideslope Shrubland**

Hemlock – Sitka Spruce Upland Forest



Sitka alder and salmonberry shrublands develop as closed canopy thickets dominated by Sitka alder (*Alnus viridis* ssp. *sinuata*) with salmonberry (*Rubus spectabilis*) occurring in lesser amounts and at lower stature. Mountain ash (*Sorbus sitchensis*) is often associated in low abundance. Lady fern (*Athyrium filix-femina*) and fireweed (*Chamerion angustifolium*) grow in canopy gaps and patch edges.

## Environment:

In general, shrublands occur in upland settings where forest development is precluded by either disturbance or climate. Sitka alder – salmonberry shrublands are common on mountain sideslopes steep enough to produce frequent avalanches or landslides, along coastal headlands, and above elevational treeline. Soils are typically well-drained unstable mineral soils.

## Disturbance:

Landslides, avalanches, and soil creep are the primary disturbance factors for shrublands establishing on sideslopes. Shrublands establishing on more gentle terrain are relatively stable but may be subject to wind and salt spray in coastal settings.

## Animal Species Supported:

### Mammals:

Showshoe hare (*Lepus americanus*) – **Uskaanaq** [NW, PG]

Black bear (*Ursus americanus*) – **Tan'erliq**

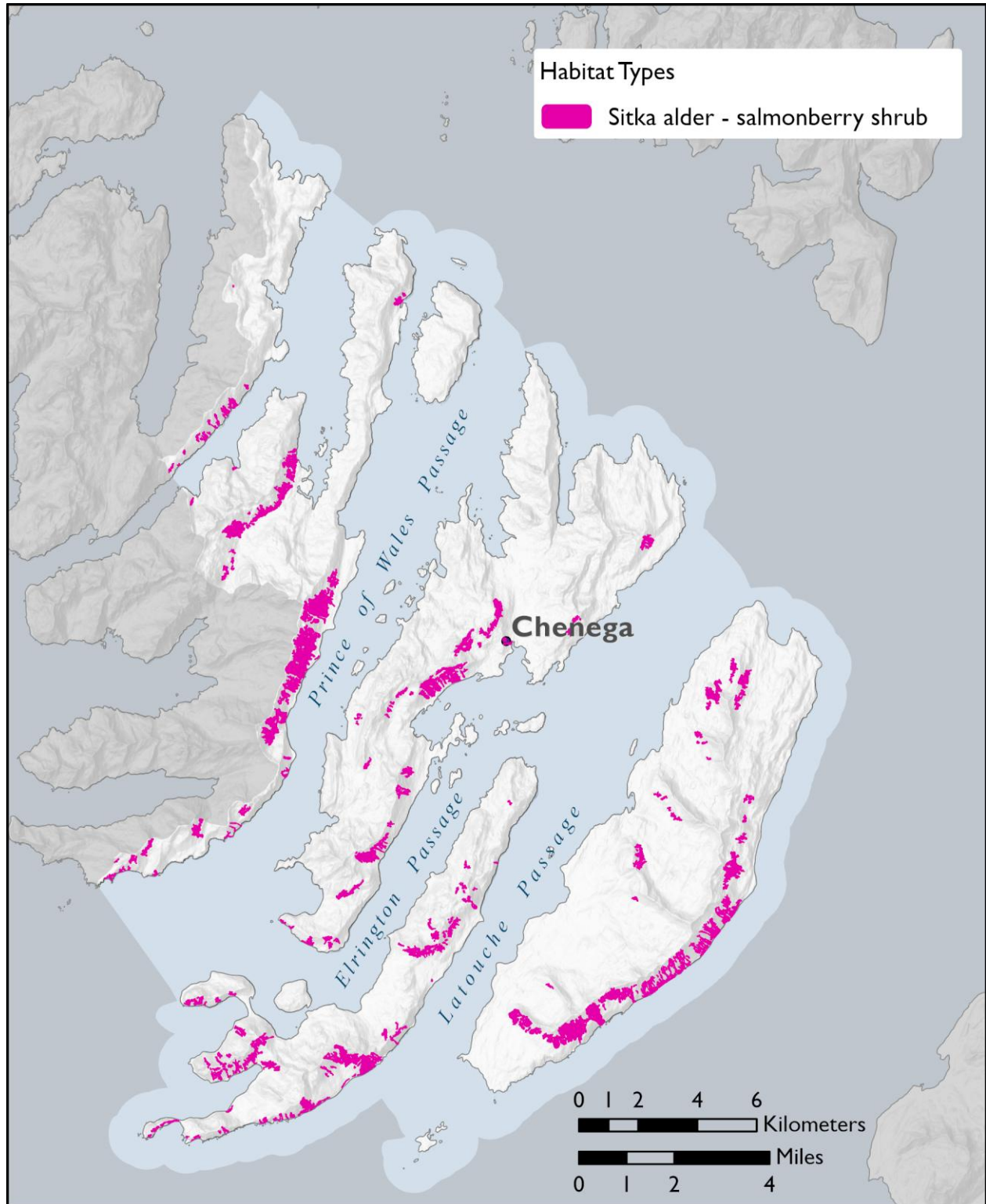
Sitka black-tailed deer (*Odocoileus hemionus* ssp. *sitkensis*) – **Tuntuq, Puhgutaq** [Chenega]

Mountain goat (*Oreamnos americanus*) – **PaRanaq, Pehnaiq, Sepaq** [Chenega]

Ground squirrel (*Spermophilus parryii*) – **Qanganaq**

Northern vole (*Microtus oeconomus*) – **Kriisaq** [N Alutiiq], **Ugna'aq** [S Alutiiq]

Fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) – **Kaugya'aq; Kangilngaq, Uuquciik** [NW, PG]

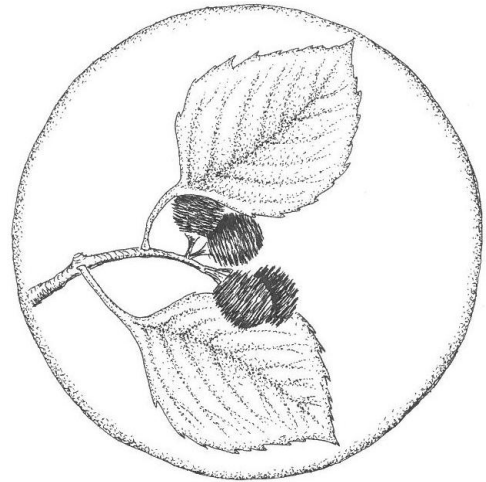


## Subsistence Plants:

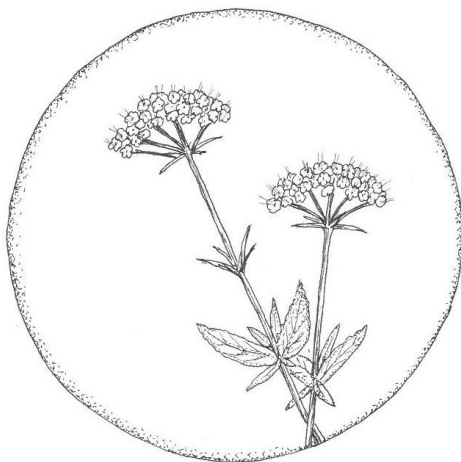
Species: Common name (*Scientific name*) – **Alutiiq name** [if known]

[NW = Nanwalek; PG = Port Graham; PWS = Prince William Sound]

Sitka alder (*Alnus viridis* ssp. *sinuata*) – **Uqgwik** [Chenega, PG], **Caariin**, **Caa'in**: Alder branches are gathered in the spring and early summer when leaves are mature and no longer sticky. Branches can be used as steam bath switches to relieve arthritis and general aches and pains, prevent skin sores, and promote good health. Wood can be used for heating homes, smoking fish, and as a construction material for kayak ribs, snowshoes, tool handles, shelters, spear shafts, fish traps, and children's toys (game pieces, whistles). Bark can be used to make a reddish-brown dye. Green cones can be chewed or boiled into a tea and used to treat sore throats, laryngitis, and diarrhea. Alutiiq people historically ate bark cooked in fat as a famine food.



Salmonberry (*Rubus spectabilis*) – **Alagnaq** (berry), **Cugelenuk** (shoots), **Qimalaa**, **Qateguatagiaq**: Berries are collected mid-summer for use in jams, jellies, and wine. People also suck nectar from blossoms and eat flower petals. Leaves and powdered bark can be turned into a heated poultice for rashes, cuts, and sores to promote healing. Peeled shoots can be sautéed and eaten or may be chewed to aid digestion.



Sitka valerian (*Valeriana sitchensis*): No documented use by Alutiiq, but other regional groups collect leaves to make a tranquilizing tea to treat insomnia, constipation, and sore muscles. Leaves can be heated and applied as a poultice to treat stomach troubles. Roots can be boiled as a sedative. **CAUTION:** large and frequent doses can cause poisoning.



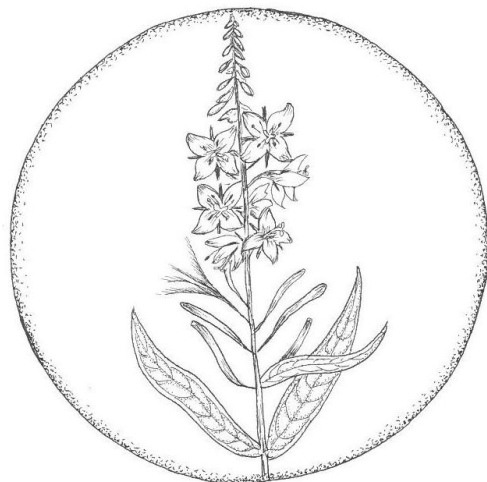
Sitka mountain ash (*Sorbus sitchensis*) – **Esqunaq:**

Leaves (summer use) and cambium (winter use) can be turned into an infusion by boiling for one hour to treat arthritis, symptoms of childbirth, colds, flu, coughs, chest congestion, fever, hair problems, sore throat, pneumonia, stomach trouble, and tuberculosis. Shoots can be used as steam bath switches to help alleviate gas during pregnancy and to facilitate delivery of a healthy baby. Fresh berries can be eaten to help treat respiratory distress. Some people pick berries for jam.

**CAUTION:** fruits are high in tannins and should not be consumed in quantity; seeds contain a cyanide-producing glycoside.



Lady fern (*Athyrium filix-femina*) - **Qaataq, Qaataqutaq, Kun'aquataq, Kunraanguasaaq:** Young shoots are collected in early spring from meadows, streambanks, and moist woodlands. Fiddleheads are cooked in butter, while rhizomes are steamed and eaten. Shoots are high in iron, potassium, and vitamins A, B, and C. **CAUTION:** fronds become toxic with age; only young fiddleheads should be consumed.



Fireweed (*Chamerion angustifolium*) – **Cillqaq, Cillqaqtaq** (plant) [PWS], **Cillaq** (flower) [PWS, PG, Kodiak]: Shoots are picked in early spring and used in soups or steamed as vegetables. Young leaves can be eaten fresh or cooked in seal oil. Blossoms are picked during the summer for use in salads and jellies or for flavoring syrups. Leaves can be dried and boiled into a tea to help stimulate breast milk production or to treat constipation. Shoots can be used as steam bath switches to help with colds and were once used as thatching in sod houses. Roots can be crushed and placed on boils to promote healing.

Devil's club (*Oplopanax horridus*) – **Cukilanarpak**: Although heavily armored with thorns, devil's club is one of the most widely used plants in southcentral Alaska. When harvested in the spring, the inner bark can be boiled into a tea to alleviate colds, fevers, coughing, stomach problems, rheumatism, tuberculosis, cancer, and diabetes. Cambium can also be chewed until soft and placed on cuts, burns, and broken bones. The outer bark and roots can be burnt and applied as a poultice to inflamed eyes or sprinkled as ash on wounds as an antibiotic before bandaging. Roots can be mashed, heated into a poultice, and applied to alleviate arthritis, wounds, toothache, and boils. Roots and stems are woody and can be used to make hooks, handles, and small utensils. Traditionally, a piece of wood was placed over a door to ward off evil spirits. Shamanic uses have been associated with this plant. **CAUTION:** thorns cause festering wounds when embedded in the skin; berries and fermented sap are poisonous and should not be consumed.



Willow (*Salix* spp.) – **Cuaq** [PWS Alutiiq], **Nim'uyaq** [PG]: Tender shoots and leaves are gathered in the spring from wetlands and along , rivers and streams. The inner bark is chewed for pain relief, or dried and ground as a flour substitute. Leaves can be boiled as tea for colds and pain, or chewed into a pulp as a poultice for stings and bites. Stems and branches are used for building fish racks, constructing children's toys (whistles, slingshots, popguns), steam bath switches, and smoking fish.



Cow parsnip (*Heracleum lanatum*) – **Ugsuuteq** [N Alutiiq], **Ugyuuteq** [S Alutiiq], **Ugyutak**, **Ugsutak**, **Vgyuun** [PWS, PG, Kodiak], **Amuulraaq**, **Ammuul'aq**: Stems are harvested in the spring and peeled and eaten raw, dipped in oil, or pickled. Tender stems are also added to soups, stews, salads, or cooked with fish. Hollow stems can be used as straws or made into children's toys (pop guns, pipes). Roots can be heated and smashed into a tooth poultice for toothache. Leaves can be chewed for sore throats, colds, and mouth sores, while a tea can alleviate symptoms of tuberculosis.

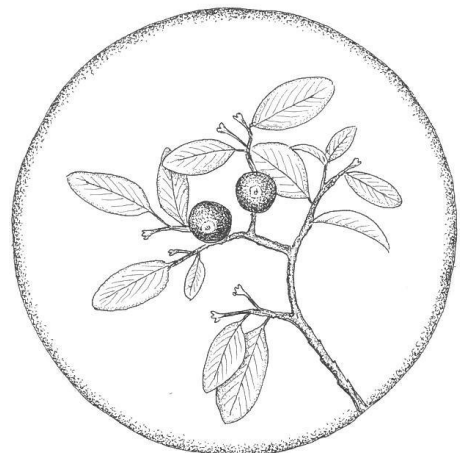
The large, oversized leaves can also be used to wipe surfaces, wrap fish or fish eggs while steaming, or line bowls to add flavor during cooking. **CAUTION**: surficial hairs and exudates can cause rashes, blisters, and itching.

False hellebore (*Veratrum viride*): The lower stem can be burned and mixed with breast milk before applying to the eye to treat cataracts. Other regional groups document Shamanic uses for this plant. **CAUTION**: ingestion can cause death by asphyxiation.



Pacific red elder (*Sambucus racemosa*) – **Tuuciik**, **Qaruckaq**, **Angutgwakutak** [NW, PG], **Sanuuliiq**, **Cirt'aungkaa**: Berries can be preserved as jelly. Hollow stems can be used to make children's pop guns. Flowers and unripe berries can be boiled into a tea that flushes kidneys and induces a cleansing sweat in those with fever, pneumonia, chills, flu, tuberculosis, and other chronic diseases. The inner and outer bark can both be used in a steam bath to relieve back problems. Branches can be used as steam bath switches used to relieve aches, pains, rheumatism, and menstrual cramps. **CAUTION**: seeds are poisonous and can cause diarrhea and vomiting.

Early blueberry (*Vaccinium ovalifolium*) – **Cuawak**: Berries are collected in August and September for use in jams, jellies, and deserts, and often added to *akutak*. Berries were once stored in oil, but are now frozen. Berries can be mashed to make a purplish-red dye.







Examples of Sitka alder-salmonberry sideslope shrubland habitat (PC: ACCS – Kenai Fjords NP)