

# A L A S K A S T A T E M U S E U M S

ALASKA STATE MUSEUM, JUNEAU ❖ SHELDON JACKSON MUSEUM, SITKA

## Sheldon Jackson Museum

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### **NOVEMBER ARTIFACT OF THE MONTH NORTHERN CALIFORNIA SOAP WEED BRUSH**

A soap weed (*Yucca glauca*) brush from the Mono Tribe of California is the Sheldon Jackson Museum's Artifact of the Month for November. Although the museum now collects artifacts only from Alaska Native cultures, a few Native American objects from other areas were acquired through the 1970s. Each November the museum exhibits one of these pieces to honor the diverse Native cultures of North America in recognition of National American Indian Heritage and Alaska Native Heritage Month.

Brushes like this one are made from the fiber of a plant called soap weed. This particular brush has a handle made of unidentified animal skin. The brush is used to brush the flour out of the grinding holes into baskets, to wash the baskets after they are used in food preparations. A bulb of the green soap weed is rubbed over the basket like a cake of soap and cleaned with the stiff soap weed brush.

Gathering was an important communal activity of the Mono people. Acorns and pine nuts were staples of their diet. Women and children gathered acorns once they had fallen to the ground, and each family had their own gathering place. The acorns were stored in conical granaries until they were ready for processing into flour which could be used as base for soups or a type of bread.

Winter hours are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday. General admission is \$3. Visitors 18 and younger, Friends of the Sheldon Jackson Museum, and those with passes are admitted free of charge.

*Yucca glauca*  
*Agavaceae family*

<http://www.archives.gov/pacific/education/4th-grade/acorn-photographs.html>

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**NORTHERN CALIFORNIA SOAP WEED BRUSH**

