



Brother Alfred Brousseau, © St. Mary's College

common name	Itherial's Spear or Wally Basket
scientific name	<i>Triteleia laxa</i>
family	Liliaceae (lily)
habitat	grassland
size	plant 1 to 1.5 feet tall; flower 3 to 4 cm across
fun facts	Flowers have blue pollen which is an unusual color for pollen.

description Member of the lily family. Each flower has three petals and three sepals. In *Triteleia* the sepals are colored like the petals, so that the flower appears to have six petals and no sepals. Wally-basket has blue to dark purple flowers.

You use the following characteristics to distinguish *Triteleia* from the similar *Brodiaea* and *Dichelostemma* flowers: *Brodiaea* have three stamens and three stamenoides. *Dichelostemma* have three true stamens and three stamenoides which have reduced stamens at their tips. The *Triteleia* have six true stamens and no stamenoides.

life cycle Itherial's Spear is a bulb producing perennial. Early in the season, the plants produce one or a few grass-like leaves. By the time the flowers are ready to bloom, the leaves have dried up and the flowers bloom in umbels (clusters) on a tall leafless stem. Only older plants with well developed bulbs have enough stored energy to produce flowers in April.

ecology *Triteleia* bulbs are an important food source for burrowing rodents such as Botta's Pocket Gophers. The bulbs have a nutty flavor and Native Americans ate them as well.

investigate

Large and showy flowers are a good indicator that *Triteleia* are insect pollinated. Observe the insects which visit the flowers.

