

wiregrass, acorns, and seaweed



WIREFRASS (*Juncus textilis*) is a type of rush. The Tongva call it *soár* and use it to make baskets and mats. Tongva baskets were, and still are, among the finest in the southwest.

Soár is especially good for baskets, because the long fiber cells in its stems make it



especially strong and flexible. This same strength allows wiregrass to survive floods without being washed away.

Oaks and wiregrass might seem to have little in common (other than being plants), but *soár* mats are used to hold the ground-up acorns as the bitter tannins are washed out of them before they are eaten. *Soár* itself is edible, both the young shoots and the seeds.



Tongva legend tells of the connection between *soár* and seaweed. When Wéywot (the being who brought the Tongva to this land) died, Coyote wanted to find the right plant to make a “mourning figure”. His search led him to seaweed, but when he brought it to the mountains where Wéywot lay, it hardened into *soár*. The Tongva carry mourning figures made in part of *soár* during the procession at the Winter Solstice.



Surfgrass, perhaps the seaweed that Coyote used.

