

SELECTED COLORADO PLANT FAMILIES

Family	Family Characteristics
<b>Aceraceae - Maple</b>	Trees with opposite leaves, palmately lobed in in Acer (Maple), pinnately compound in <i>Negundo</i> (Box-elder); two-winged fruits (samaras).
<b>Agavaceae - Agave</b>	Woody plants with stiff, evergreen leaves in a basal rosette; inflorescence (flower cluster) of large, white flowers; 3 petals and 3 petal-like sepals with 6 stamens; formerly in Liliaceae.
<b>Alismataceae - Water-plantain</b>	Aquatic or semi-aquatic; non-woody; simple, basal leaves with broad blades and sheathing bases; flowers radially symmetrical; sepals 3, petals 3.
<b>Alliaceae - Onion</b>	Erect, non-woody; leaves usually basal, sheathing, linear, parallel-veined; umbellate (umbrella-shaped) flower clusters; distinctive onion odor; separated from Liliaceae.
<b>Alsiniaceae - Chickweed</b>	Leaves opposite, simple, entire (without teeth or lobes along margins); stems swollen at the nodes; flowers radially symmetrical, petals usually 5, often notched; 10 stamens; usually a subfamily of Carophyllaceae, but has separate instead of united sepals.
<b>Anacardiaceae - Sumac</b>	Leaves alternate, usually pinnate or trifoliolate; flowers in panicles (branched flower cluster with stalked flowers); stems and leaves often contain poisonous or irritating substances; predominantly tropical family.
<b>Apiaceae - Parsley</b>	Formerly Umbelliferae; stems usually hollow; leaves alternate, compound with sheathing bases; flowers small, often in compound umbels (umbrella-like flower cluster); petals 5, usually white or yellow, stamens 5, alternate to petals.
<b>Apocynaceae - Dogbane</b>	Simple, entire, opposite leaves; milky juice; small, pink or white, bell-shaped flowers with 5 partly united petals; closely related to milkweeds.
<b>Asclepiadaceae - Milkweed</b>	Non-woody; simple leaves, opposite or whorled; flower with corona of hooded appendages between the 5 stamens and pistil; 5 sepals and 5 petals, usually reflexed (bent back); milky juice.
<b>Asparagaceae - Asparagus</b>	One genus, <i>Asparagus</i> , in area; leaves reduced to bladeless scales; delicate and ferny in appearance; fruit a berry; formerly in Liliaceae.

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<b>Apocynaceae - Dogbane</b>	Simple, entire, opposite leaves; milky juice; small, pink or white, bell-shaped flowers with 5 partly united petals; closely related to milkweeds.
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<b>Asparagaceae - Asparagus</b>	One genus, <i>Asparagus</i> , in area; leaves reduced to bladeless scales; delicate and ferny in appearance; fruit a berry; formerly in Liliaceae.

<b>Aspidiaceae - Shieldfern</b>	Fronds with sori (dark dots) on the face of the pinnule (secondary leaflet); fronds distinctly pinnate (divided like a feather), with one main axis, the pinnae not fused to the side of the stipe (stalk); large, stout plants.
<b>Aspleniaceae - Spleenwort</b>	Fronds all alike, simply pinnate, with sori (dark dots), oblong or linear.
<b>Asteraceae - Sunflower</b>	Compositae; heads composed of many small ray and/or disk flowers on a flat or conical disk (receptacle); head appears as single blossom and is surrounded by phyllaries (green bracts); ray flowers (also called ligules) strap shaped, bilaterally symmetrical appear to be petals; disk flowers tubular, radially symmetrical and in the center of head; some sp. have only ray flowers, some only disk flowers, others have both; sepal modified into bristle or scale called pappus.
<b>Berberidaceae - Barberry</b>	Shrubs with wood and inner bark yellow; leaves alternate; flowers yellow with 6 petals (and 6 distinct sepals); fruit a few-seeded berry.
<b>Betulaceae - Birch</b>	Trees and shrubs found on moist soil; male and female flowers normally on the same plant in separate staminate (male) and pistillate (female) catkins; staminate catkins long and drooping; female catkins cone-like, upright.
<b>Boraginaceae - Borage</b>	Non-woody plants with stiff hairs on stems and leaves (except for <i>Mertensia</i> ); four-lobed ovary produces 4 nutlets; leaves simple, alternate; flowers radially symmetrical, 5-lobed corolla; petals are united with 5 stamens attached to the corolla-tube.
<b>Brassicaceae - Mustard</b>	Formerly Cruciferae; 4 petals are in the shape of a cross; 4 sepals; superior ovary (petals attached at base of ovary); flowers of Onagraceae also have 4 petals but have an inferior ovary (petals attached at top of ovary); 6 stamens (4 long, 2 short), fruits divided by a papery replum (as in money plant); alternate leaves; peppery tasting juice; includes many important vegetables such as kale, cabbage, broccoli.
<b>Cactaceae - Cactus</b>	Succulent (thick and fleshy) stems with spines (which are modified leaves) on areoles (small cushion-like organs); flowers with many petals, sepals, and stamens.
<b>Calochortaceae - Mariposa</b>	Formerly in Liliaceae; family includes single genus; flowers (usually white or rose) have large, showy petals bearing a "gland" near the base consisting of a depression surrounded by colored hairs; flowers with 3 petals and 3 petal-like sepals; leaves linear with parallel veins.

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<b>Boraginaceae - Borage</b>	Non-woody plants with stiff hairs on stems and leaves (except for <i>Mertensia</i> ); four-lobed ovary produces 4 nutlets; leaves simple, alternate; flowers radially symmetrical, 5-lobed corolla; petals are united with 5 stamens attached to the corolla-tube.
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<b>Campanulaceae - Bellflower</b>	Non-woody plants with petals fused; 5-lobed, inferior ovary (petals attached at top of ovary); 3-parted style; milky or acrid juice; leaves alternate, simple.
<b>Cannabaceae - Hops</b>	Erect, aromatic non-woody sp.; flowers with no petals and 5 sepals; male and female flowers dioecious (on separate plants) family includes <i>Cannabis</i> (marijuana or hemp) and <i>Humulus</i> (hops).
<b>Capparaceae - Caper</b>	Annual non-woody sp.; often smelly; closely related to the mustards but fruit lacks the replum (papery division); stamens (often more than 6) usually long, exserted (projecting beyond corolla); flowers with 4 petals, 4 sepals, superior ovary (petals attached at base of ovary), leaves alternate.
<b>Caprifoliaceae - Honeysuckle</b>	Shrubs of vines with opposite leaves, lacking stipules (leaf-like appendages at base of leaf stalks), unlike Rubiaceae; corolla of 4 or 5 fused petals with 5 stamens inserted in the corolla tube; ovary inferior (petals attached at top of ovary); fruits are usually fleshy and berry-like.
<b>Caryophyllaceae - Pink</b>	Non-woody; leaves opposite, simple and entire (without marginal teeth), often with swollen nodes where leaves join stems; flowers radially symmetrical, petals distinct, 4 or 5, or rarely none; sepals fused, ovary superior (petals attached at base of ovary); similar sp, with separate sepals and clawless petals are in the family Alsinaceae.
<b>Chenopodiaceae - Goosefoot</b>	Non-wood plants with small, green flowers lacking showy petals but with 2-5 fused sepals; fruit can be showy; family easily confused with Amaranthaceae from which it differs in lacking dry, papery bracts and fused filaments.
<b>Convallariaceae - Mayflower</b>	Recently separated from lily family; non-woody plants with leafy stems from rhizomes (underground stems), erect or spreading; flowers white with narrow tepals (undifferentiated petals and sepals); fruits red or green berries.
<b>Crassulaceae - Stonecrop</b>	Non-woody plants with fleshy simple leaves; vegetative reproduction common; flowers starlike with 4-5 petals and an equal number of sepals; ovary superior (petals attached at base of ovary).
<b>Cupressaceae - Cypress</b>	Trees or shrubs, erect or prostrate; leaves persistent, scale-like or awl-shaped, or both, often closely appressed to the branches; cones usually woody but berry-like in junipers; pollen cones small; decay-resistant wood, filled with substances that repel insects.

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<b>Cyperaceae - Sedge</b>	Stems are often 3-sided (triangular); grass-like; perennial non-woody plants; stems not hollow; wet or marshy areas; reduced flowers in spikes (unstaked flowers along a main axis).
<b>Equisetaceae - Horsetail</b>	Non-woody plants with erect, hollow, jointed, ridged stems which arise from rhizomes (underground stems); whorls of scale leaves.
<b>Fabaceae - Pea</b>	Formerly Leguminosae - flowers papilionaceous (shaped like a butterfly) with 5 petals including banner (upper petal), wings (2, one on each side) and keel (2 fused petals often enclosing pistil and stamens); superior ovary (petals attached at base of ovary); fruit a legume (a one-celled, usually several-seeded pod); leaves alternate, compound.
<b>Fagaceae - Oak</b>	Trees and shrubs with alternate, pinnately lobed leaves, buds clustered at the tips of the twigs; fruit a nut (acorn), partially enclosed by cup-like structure; flowers unisexual. Monocious (flowers of both sexes on same plant); staminate flowers in pendulous catkin and pistillate flowers in a small cluster; some members are wind-pollinated and some are insect pollinated; economically important family producing lumber, tannins.
<b>Gentianaceae - Gentian</b>	Leaves opposite, entire, often fused at the base; flowers radially symmetrical with corolla of 4 or 5 fused petals; superior ovary (petals attached at the base of the ovary).
<b>Geraniaceae - Geranium</b>	Non-woody plants with simple leaves either palmately (like a hand) or pinnately (like a feather) lobed, or compound leaves, often opposite but usually crowded at the base; flowers have 5 separate petals and sepals, 5 stigmas; style matures as a stiff beak (as in filaree or storks-bill); geranium oil (from the leaves of <i>Pelargonium</i> ) used in perfume industry.
<b>Grossulariaceae - Gooseberry</b>	Shrubs with alternate leaves often palmately (like a hand) lobed; currants are usually unarmed; gooseberries are spiny or prickly; fruit is a pulpy berry or capsule (dry, multi-chambered fruit splitting at maturity); flowers usually tubular and with 5 petal-like sepals, hypanthium (fused bases of floral structures forming cup or tube); inferior ovary (petals attached at top of ovary).
<b>Helleboraceae - Hellebore</b>	Former members of the Ranunculaceae with fruits that are follicles (fruits that open along one edge or berries rather than achenes (small, dry one-seeded fruit)); non-woody plants with numerous stamens, often tepals (undifferentiated petals and sepals), typically zygomorphic (bilaterally symmetrical) as in <i>Delphinium</i> and <i>Aconitum</i> .

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<b>Geraniaceae - Geranium</b>	Non-woody plants with simple leaves either palmately (like a hand) or pinnately (like a feather) lobed, or compound leaves, often opposite but usually crowded at the base; flowers have 5 separate petals and sepals, 5 stigmas; style matures as a stiff beak (as in filaree or storks-bill); geranium oil (from the leaves of <i>Pelargonium</i> ) used in perfume industry.
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<b>Hydrangeaceae - Hydrangea</b>	Shrubs with opposite leaves; fragrant flowers with numerous stamens, white petals, and a partially inferior ovary (petals attached at top of ovary).
<b>Hydrophyllaceae - Waterleaf</b>	Non-woody plants with coiled flower clusters; flowers fused, 5-lobed, bell-shaped with 5 exserted (projecting beyond flower) stamens; leaves often lobed or divided; although often bristly like Boragniaceae, Hydrophyllaceae differs in having an unlobed ovary and fruits that are not divided into four 1-seeded nutlets.
<b>Hypericaceae - St Johns wort</b>	Non-woody, leaves opposite, simple, entire, punctate (dotted with glands); flowers radially symmetrical, flower clusters cymose (braches with central flower blooming first); usually 5 separate yellow to orange petals; ovary superior (petals attached at base of ovary); fruit a capsule (dry, multi-chambered fruit splitting at maturity).
<b>Iridaceae - Iris</b>	Perennial non-woody plants from bulbs, rhizomes (underground stems), or corms (enlarged stem base); leaves narrow, equitant (with overlapping bases); flowers of 2 series of 3 petal-like structures; stamens 3 (with petal-like styles in Iris); ovary inferior (petals attached at top of ovary). Fruit a many-seeded capsule (dry, multi-chambered fruit splitting at maturity).
<b>Lamiaceae - Mint</b>	Formerly Labiatae - Mostly aromatic non-woody plants with opposite leaves, square stems, irregular two-lipped flowers with 5 fused petals; stamens 2 or 4, ovary superior (petals attached at base of ovary) with 4 lobes maturing into 4 nutlets; leaves simple, usually toothed or lobed, hairy with epidermal glands secreting volatile oils.
<b>Liliaceae - Lily</b>	Perennial non-woody plants from bulbs, rhizomes (underground stems), or corms (enlarged stem bases); leaves linear; flowers often showy, with a conspicuous 6-parted petal-like grouping of tepals (undifferentiated petals and sepals); flower parts in groups of 3's; leaves usually linear or grasslike with parallel veins; one seed leaf.
<b>Linaceae - Flax</b>	Non-woody plants; leaves simple, entire, alternate, narrow, with superior ovary (petals attached at the base of ovary), with 5 separate petals and sepals, stamens monadelphous (fused into a tube); fruit a capsule (dry, multi-chambered fruit splitting at maturity).
<b>Malvaceae - Mallow</b>	Non-woody plants and shrubs with stellate (star shaped) hairs, palmately lobed leaves; numerous stamens fused by their filaments; fruit often shaped like a cheese wheel; flowers usually radially symmetrical, 5 petals.

<b>Hydrangeaceae - Hydrangea</b>	Shrubs with opposite leaves; fragrant flowers with numerous stamens, white petals, and a partially inferior ovary (petals attached at top of ovary).
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<b>Liliaceae - Lily</b>	Perennial non-woody plants from bulbs, rhizomes (underground stems), or corms (enlarged stem bases); leaves linear; flowers often showy, with a conspicuous 6-parted petal-like grouping of tepals (undifferentiated petals and sepals); flower parts in groups of 3's; leaves usually linear or grasslike with parallel veins; one seed leaf.
<b>Linaceae - Flax</b>	Non-woody plants; leaves simple, entire, alternate, narrow, with superior ovary (petals attached at the base of ovary), with 5 separate petals and sepals, stamens monadelphous (fused into a tube); fruit a capsule (dry, multi-chambered fruit splitting at maturity).
<b>Malvaceae - Mallow</b>	Non-woody plants and shrubs with stellate (star shaped) hairs, palmately lobed leaves; numerous stamens fused by their filaments; fruit often shaped like a cheese wheel; flowers usually radially symmetrical, 5 petals.

<b>Melanthiaceae - False Hellebore</b>	Recently separated from Liliaceae; inner tepals (undifferentiated petals and sepals) have prominent gland at the base; ovaries have prominent styles.
<b>Monotropaceae - Pinesap</b>	Non-green (often red, brown, yellow or white) fleshy, often parasitic non-woody plants lacking chlorophyll; scaly leaves.
<b>Nyctaginaceae - Four-o'clock</b>	Non-woody plants; leaves fleshy, opposite (originating in pairs at the nodes); umbellate flower clusters subtended by conspicuous, often papery bracts (reduced leaves usually subtending a flower).
<b>Onagraceae - Evening Primrose</b>	Non-woody plants having radially symmetrical flowers with 4 petals, reflexed sepals; inferior ovary (petals attached at top of ovary) or hypanthium (fused bases of floral parts forming cup or tube); simple leaves.
<b>Orchidaceae - Orchid</b>	Perennial non-woody plants; zygomorphic (bilaterally symmetrical) flowers with 3 petals, the lower petal forming a lip or sac; inferior ovary (petals attached at top of ovary).
<b>Orobanchaceae - Broomrape</b>	Non-green, non-woody root parasites with flowers like those of the Scrophulariaceae.
<b>Oxalidaceae - Woodsorrel</b>	Non-woody plants with pinnately (like a feather) or palmately (like a hand) compound leaves, sour juice, radially symmetrical flowers, 10 fused stamens and 5 styles; fruit often an explosive capsule (dry, multi-chambered fruit splitting at maturity).
<b>Papaveraceae - Poppy</b>	Non-woody plants with radially symmetrical flowers with 4-6 crumpled petals, 2-3 deciduous sepals, numerous stamens, and a milky or yellowish juice; leaves alternate; ovary superior (petals attached at base of ovary); fruit a capsule (dry, multi-chambered fruit splitting at maturity).
<b>Pinaceae - Pine</b>	Trees or shrubs; needle-like leaves; fruit a woody cone with imbricate (overlapping) scales.
<b>Plantaginaceae - Plantain</b>	Non-woody plants with basal rosettes of parallel-veined leaves; papery flowers in spikes (stalkless flowers along a main axis); stamens usually exserted (projecting beyond petals); seeds often mucilaginous.
<b>Poaceae - Grass</b>	Formerly Gramineae; non-woody plants with parallel leaves; roots fibrous stems round, often hollow; leaves alternate, simple; flowers in tiny spikes (stalkless flowers along a main axis), flowers usually with 2 feathery stigmas and 3 stamens.
<b>Polemoniaceae - Phlox</b>	Showy, radially symmetrical flowers often tubular with 5 flaring lobes; styles 1 with 3 stigmas.

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<b>Papaveraceae - Poppy</b>	Non-woody plants with radially symmetrical flowers with 4-6 crumpled petals, 2-3 deciduous sepals, numerous stamens, and a milky or yellowish juice; leaves alternate; ovary superior (petals attached at base of ovary); fruit a capsule (dry, multi-chambered fruit splitting at maturity).
<b>Pinaceae - Pine</b>	Trees or shrubs; needle-like leaves; fruit a woody cone with imbricate (overlapping) scales.
<b>Plantaginaceae - Plantain</b>	Non-woody plants with basal rosettes of parallel-veined leaves; papery flowers in spikes (stalkless flowers along a main axis); stamens usually exserted (projecting beyond petals); seeds often mucilaginous.
<b>Poaceae - Grass</b>	Formerly Gramineae; non-woody plants with parallel leaves; roots fibrous stems round, often hollow; leaves alternate, simple; flowers in tiny spikes (stalkless flowers along a main axis), flowers usually with 2 feathery stigmas and 3 stamens.
<b>Polemoniaceae - Phlox</b>	Showy, radially symmetrical flowers often tubular with 5 flaring lobes; styles 1 with 3 stigmas.

<b>Polygonaceae - Buckwheat</b>	Non-woody plants with swollen nodes (family name means "many knees"); leaves are usually alternate with a membranous sheath forming a collar about the node (except in <i>Eriogonum</i> ); flowers radially symmetrical, typically small; 3-6 petal-like sepals; petals absent; superior ovary (petals attached at base of ovary).
<b>Portulacaceae - Purslane</b>	Non-woody; flowers radially symmetrical with 4 to 8 (often 5) petals and 2 sepals; stamens as many as petals and opposite them; flowers open only in sunshine or bright light; leaves simple, often fleshy.
<b>Ranunculaceae - Buttercup</b>	Non-woody plants; compound leaves with sheathing leaf bases; flowers with numerous stamens, flower often composed of tepals (undifferentiated petals and sepals), typically radially symmetrical; leaves usually alternate (but opposite in <i>Clematis</i> and some <i>Ranunculus</i> ) and palmately compound.
<b>Rosaceae - Rose</b>	Trees, shrubs, or non-woody plants; radially symmetrical flowers, 5 petals, hypanthium (fused bases of floral structures forming cup or tube); alternate leaves, simple or compound with paired stipules (leaf-like appendages where leaf stalk joins stem); many commercial fruits in this family (strawberry, peach, apple, raspberry, cherry, plum).
<b>Rubiaceae - Madder</b>	Small 4-petaled flowers; square stems; opposite or whorled leaves.
<b>Salicaceae - Willow</b>	Trees and shrubs; leaves simple, alternate; catkin-bearing; dioecious (male and female flowers on different plants). Fruit a capsule (dry, multi-celled fruit that splits open at maturity).
<b>Santalaceae - Sandalwood</b>	Perennial; leaves glabrous, alternate; flowers in axillary clusters (in angle where leaf joins stem), appearing terminal; stamens 5; anthers with a tuft of hairs at base.
<b>Saxifragaceae - Saxifrage</b>	Perennial; leaves often basal or alternate, palmately (like a hand) veined or lobed; usually 5 petals and sepals.
<b>Scrophulariaceae - Figwort</b>	Usually showy, bilabiate (2-lipped) flowers, lips usually lobed; stamens 2,4 (or 5 with one not bearing pollen); superior ovary (petals attached at base of ovary); similar to Lamiaceae (mints) but without 4-lobed ovary and square stems (with the exception of the square stemmed <i>Scrophularia</i> ).
<b>Typhaceae - Cattail</b>	Linear leaves, usually basal; monoecious (flowers of both sexes on same plant); flowers in terminal spadix (spike with stalkless flowers on thickened main axis).

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<b>Verbenaceae - Vervain</b>	Zygomorphic (bilaterally symmetrical) flowers with fused petals; leaves opposite; stems often square; similar to mints but lack mint smell; fruit of 4 nutlets except <i>Phyla</i> .
<b>Violaceae - Violet</b>	Irregular flowers (bilaterally symmetrical); 5 separate petals, the lower one with a spur-like nectary (nectar gland); spurred anthers; has cleistogamous (closed, self-pollinating) flowers in additions to chastogamous (open, insect-pollinated) flowers; leaves alternate, simple, sometimes lobed or dissected; fruit an explosive capsule (dry, multi-chambered fruit splitting at maturity).

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