Arctostaphylos usv-ursi subsp. cratericola

GUATEMALAN BEARBERRY

Photos: Berkeley Botanical Gardens.

Arctostaphylos uva-ursi is variable with many forms being named. Although very similar to some of these forms, *A. uva-usi* subsp. *cratericola* is the only named *A. uva-ursi* subspecies due to its extreme disjunction from the nearest *uva-ursi* population. *A. uva-ursi* subsp. *cratericola* is probably most similar to *A. uva-ursi f. adenotricha,* a glandular form that is dominant in the Southern Rockies of Colorado and New Mexico. It differs from other forms of *A. uva-ursi* by having flower pedicels with fine, glandular hairs while all other forms of *uva-ursi* have glabrous pedicels, or glandular hairs. It also differs in having leaves that are both typical spatulate, uva-ursi shape along with pointed leaves, although this can also be seen in other *A. uva-ursi* populations. *A. uva-ursi* subsp. *cratericola* occurs in three Departments of Guatemala: Volcán de Agua, in the Dept. of Sacatepéquez, where it is growing between 2500-4000 m; Volcán Zunil, in the Dept. of Quezaltenango, growing from 3100 m to 3800 m; and in the Sierra de los Cuchumatanes, Dept. Huehuetenango, growing from 3500 m. to 3700 m. At this location, it is abundant, growing on limestone. At these locations, it grows with the Guatemalan Tetragona Juniper (*Juniperus standleyi*), a high altitude Juniper related to *Juniperus monticola* found on the high volcanoes of Mexico, and *Pinus hartwegii,* a high altitude Pine of Mexico and Guatemala, sometimes known in this region as *Pinus donnell-smithii*. When first discovered in Guatemala, it was imagined that it would also be discovered on some of the higher mountain peaks in Mexico, such as Volcán Tacaná, in Chiapas near the Guatemala border, where many of the same plants that are on the high peaks of Guatemala also occur, or on the high peaks of the Volcanic Cross Range of Central Mexico. Why it does not occur on any of these peaks is a mystery, especially considering that it must have reached Guatemala by way of Mexico. Perhaps in the future it will be discovered somewhere in Mexico. Until then, it remains as perhaps the most isolated manzanita in the world.