

Berries of the West Coast



Gifts From the Land:



Berries are an **important** cultural food. Historically, Northwest Indigenous People put great effort into cultivating, harvesting, and preserving berries, and many communities carry on these traditions today.

Berry season is a time to gather and celebrate with friends and family.

Food is Medicine:



Berries are incredibly healthy, with some of the highest **antioxidants** of any fresh food. Antioxidants fight disease and protect our bodies from damage. The antioxidants in berries are present in their rich, vibrant colour: **blue**, **red**, **black**, and **purple** are associated with improved memory and healthy ageing!

Nature's Candy:



Wild local berries are **tastier** and more nutritious than commercial. Commercially grown berries are often picked before they are ripe and transported long distances before sitting on grocery shelves, leading to loss of nutrients. Commercial berries can also be quite expensive. Enjoy **fresh local berries!**



Some berries can be **toxic**. If you're unsure, check with an Elder or plant expert.



Respect the land. Ask permission before foraging on someone's property.



Avoid foraging on roadsides, industrial areas, and low to the ground on paths where dogs may have peed!

SALMONBERRY



Salmonberries grow in moist forested areas, especially along streams and rivers.

Leaves: Grow in groups of 3, serrated, pointed at the tip.

Flowers: Pink with 5 petals.

Berries: Vary in colour from yellow-orange, to red, to deep purple, even all on the same bush!

Salmonberries are the first to ripen in springtime, from April through June.



Salmonberries signify the start of salmon season. If there are abundant salmonberries in the spring, it is an indicator that many salmon will be returning to their ancestral streams.



The shoots of salmonberry are also called “bear candy” because bears love this tender, juicy treat in the springtime. Humans also enjoy eating them peeled, either fresh or lightly steamed.

BLACKBERRY



Wild trailing blackberries like to grow along edges of wooded areas and in clearings. Careful not to trip over their thorny stems!

Leaves: Grow in groups of 3 with pointy, serrated edges.

Flowers: White with 5 petals.

Wild blackberries are smaller than non-native blackberries, but their flavour is strong and sweet. Only female plants bear fruit in cone-shaped clusters of purple-black juicy berries, and they ripen in July-August.



Blackberries make excellent pies, jams, and jellies, and can be combined with salal berries to make fruit leather.



The leaves of blackberries can be dried and made into a soothing tea for sore throats and colds.

CRANBERRY



Wild cranberries grow low to the ground in moss, peat bogs, on the coast, and on mountains.

Leaves: Small, oval, evergreen with woody stems.

Berries: Green at first, turning ruby red when they ripen in autumn, and stay red through the winter.

Flowers: Their graceful light-pink flowers look like the head of a crane - hence the name "crane-berry"!



While cranberries can be eaten fresh, Northwest Indigenous People traditionally cook and sweeten the berries in a sauce to improve the tart flavour.



Cranberry often accompanies turkey and other meats, and goes well in salad dressings, desserts, breads, and jams.

STRAWBERRY



Wild strawberries grow in mats in woodlands, meadows, clearings, and coastlines. Each plant sends out "runners" that turn into new plants.

Leaves: Grow in groups of 3, slightly fuzzy with serrated edges.

Berries: Oval, bright red with a delicious scent. Strawberries are unique in that they wear their seeds on the outside. June is peak strawberry season, and they do not ripen after harvest.

Flowers: White with 5 petals.



Strawberry leaves can be dried and made into a mineral-rich tea. They have a pleasantly mild flavor and are known to soothe inflamed gums, sore throats, and upset stomach.



HUCKLEBERRY



Red Huckleberries grow in shady forested areas. Their leaves are lime green with smooth edges. The round berries are orange-red and ripen from June to August.



Evergreen Huckleberries grow in evergreen forests and woodlands, and can reach 8 feet tall. As the name suggests, the bushes stay green all year. The small leaves are waxy with a strong central vein. The berries are dark-blue or black, similar to blueberries, and ripen in August through November.



They are sweetest after the first frost.

Mountain Huckleberries are also called *Big Huckleberries*. They have small oval-shaped, finely toothed leaves with a pointed tip. Their shiny, dark purple berries ripen in late summer through fall.



Huckleberries are among the healthiest of berries. They contain important compounds which helps lower cholesterol, balance blood sugar, improve heart health, and strengthen your immune system.

SALAL



Salal grows in lush thickets in coastal areas and lowland forests.

Leaves: Egg-shaped, dark green, thick and waxy.

Flowers: Look like little white bells, sticky and slightly hairy.

Berries: Blue-black, with a small star on the bottom. Ripens between July and September.



Salal is an important traditional food. The berries can be eaten fresh or cooked, or dried and preserved to eat throughout winter.

They are high in protein and omega-3 fatty acids. Northwest Indigenous People mash salal berries and shape into cakes which they dry and store in bentwood boxes to enjoy throughout the year. You can mix berries with dried meat, fish, and other berries to make pemmican, the ultimate "Power bar"!



THIMBLEBERRY



Grows in a many-stemmed bush up to 6 feet tall in wet woodlands.

Leaves: Soft, fuzzy, and resemble a large maple leaf. They have serrated edges and 5 sharply pointed lobes.

Berries: Mature in July-September into bright red berries shaped like caps or thimbles (hence the name!). They are tart and sweet with a pleasant crunch.

Flowers: Large and white, resembling a rose.



Thimbleberry's large soft leaves give it another name: "toilet paper plant"!

A large thimbleberry leaf can also be used as a berry-picking basket. Gather the top 3 points of the leaf and pierce them with the stem, then fold the stem over to hold the shape of the basket.



ELDERBERRY



Elder is a small woody tree that grows up to 20 feet high.

Leaves: Each leaf has 5 to 9 leaflets with serrated edges.

Berries: Red elder has cone-shaped flower clusters that bloom in March and April and turn to red berries in June. Blue elder has flat-topped flowers that bloom in June and turn to clusters of dark-blue berries from July through August.



Elderberries contain Vitamins A, B and C, and minerals calcium, iron, and potassium.



Blue elderberries (used more often than red) make delicious jam, jelly, and syrup. It is anti-viral and used for preventing and treating colds and flu. Fully dried berries are made into tea.



CAUTION: Red and blue elder stems, leaves, unripe fruit, and seeds contain a toxic alkaloid that can cause upset stomach when eaten fresh. Cooking or drying helps remove this alkaloid.

SASKATOON BERRY



Also known as *Juneberry* or *Serviceberry*, Saskatoon berries thrive in many different habitats, from moist stream banks to dry slopes.

Bushes vary from 3 to 21 feet tall, with smooth red-grey bark.

Leaves: oval, toothed on the tip.

Berries: Dark blue and sweet. They can be dried whole, or pressed into cakes before drying. Fruits are ripe in May through July, depending on elevation and weather conditions.



The city of Saskatoon is named after the Saskatoon berry, and is derived from the Cree *misâskwatômina*. The sweet, fleshy fruits were an important ingredient in pemmican.

SOAPBERRY



Soapberries grow in shrubs up to 6 feet tall, and can withstand harsh environments.



Soapberries are also known as *foamberries*, because the berries contains compounds called saponins that lather like soap. They can be used to make cleansers or even shampoo.



When the bitter, red round berries are whipped, they make a foamy dessert often called “Indian ice cream” which can be used as a palate cleanser between courses.



Also called *buffaloberries*, because they were important for flavouring buffalo meat.

Fruit Leather Recipe

Rinse berries after foraging. Good choices include salal, thimbleberries, blackberries, huckleberries.

Blend berries (12 cups of berries makes about 1 cookie sheet of fruit leather) with $\frac{1}{2}$ cup liquid sweetener (maple syrup, honey, agave, etc.) and the juice of 1 fresh lemon.

Pour blended berries $\frac{1}{4}$ inch thick onto a cookie sheet with parchment paper.



Sun Drying Method:

Place the cookie sheet in full sun. Put a cheesecloth overtop to protect from bugs. It will take 2-4 days to dry completely, so bring the berries in at night to protect from dew.

After the berries are mostly dried, lay another piece of parchment paper over top and carefully turn over. Peel the old paper off and let the other side dry out. Cut into strips and store in the fridge.

Oven Method:

Place the cookie sheet in the oven at the lowest temperature ($\sim 170^\circ$) and leave the door slightly cracked. After 6-8 hours when the berries are mostly dry, place another piece of parchment paper over the berries and flip over. Peel off the old paper and continue drying until a leathery texture is reached.

If you need to leave the house, simply turn off the oven and place the berries in a warm spot with a cloth draped over them.

Berry Tea Recipe

Many berry leaves including strawberry, blackberry, huckleberry, thimbleberry, salmonberry, and salal make delicious teas.

They are easy to dry- simply bundle and hang in a warm place with good air circulation. Keep out of direct sunlight.

Once dried, crumble the leaves and place in air-tight jars or bags. Store in a cool, dark place. They last about a year.

Get creative with blending your own berry tea combinations!

Here's a sample recipe to get you started:

Mix 2 parts of each of the following: strawberry leaf, huckleberry leaf, hawthorn leaf and flower, hawthorn berry, and rose hip with 1 part dried hibiscus and dried orange peel.

Use 1 tablespoon tea mix per 1 cup hot water.

Steep for 10-15 minutes. Add sweetener if desired.

To make iced tea, simply pour steeped tea into jars and place in fridge.

Drink 1-2 cups daily. Enjoy!

