

Alaska Wild Berries

SCRUMPTIOUSLY EXTRAORDINARY

It's a wild berry lover's dream. Whether gathering them for fun or harvesting for subsistence, berry picking can easily become an annual tradition that delights your palate and puts a twist on your culinary adventures. From mid- to late-summer through the first frosts, berries decorate the Alaska landscape from the alpine slopes to the forest floors.



Berry Berry Good

Enjoy this overview of berry picking in Alaska. While it is not exhaustive — there are over 50 types of edible berries in Alaska — it should start you on the right foot and keep you from stumbling into trouble.



Bearberry
Arctostaphylos sp.
Found in subalpine and boreal woodlands and forests and in tundra and alpine shrublands.



Blueberry
Vaccinium alaskaense, *V. ovalifolium*, and *V. uliginosum*
Found in tundra, open woods, above timberline and in low-lying bogs.



Bunchberry
Cornus canadensis
Found in spruce and birch forests.



Cloudberry
Rubus chamaemorus
Found in damp fields, marshes, wet meadows, and tundra.



Cranberry (highbush)
Viburnum edule
Found in open woods and meadows.



Crowberry
Empetrum nigrum
Found in alpine muskegs and tundra.



Currants (red, black, white)
Ribes sp.
Found in forested areas.



Elderberry (Red)
Sambucus racemosa
Found along the coast in forested areas.



Gooseberry
Ribes oxycanthoides
Found in alpine thickets, rocky woods, and as ornamental cultivars.



Huckleberry (Red)
Vaccinium parvifolium
Found in somewhat moist habitats along the southcentral and southeast coasts of Alaska.



Lingonberry (lowbush cranberries)
Vaccinium vitis-idaea
Found in rocky or peaty forest soils, alpine muskegs and tundra.



Nagoonberry
Rubus arcticus
Found in open, dry, and moist habitats including tundra, bogs, meadows, and stream and lake shores.



Raspberry
Rubus idaeus
Found in previously-disturbed areas, thickets and forest edges.



Salmonberry
Rubus spectabilis
Found in moist coastal forests, stream sides, and shorelines, and disturbed areas such as roadsides and woodland edges in southeast and southcentral Alaska.



Serviceberry
Amelanchier sp.
Found in thickets or borders of woods in southeast, southcentral, and interior Alaska.



Strawberry
Fragaria sp.
Found in moist, sandy soil growing in meadows, rock crevices, and coasts. Scattered throughout the southeast, interior, Gulf of Alaska and Aleutians.



Watermelon Berry
Streptopus amplexifolius
Found near shaded stream banks and in moist thickets on mountain slopes in subarctic Alaska.

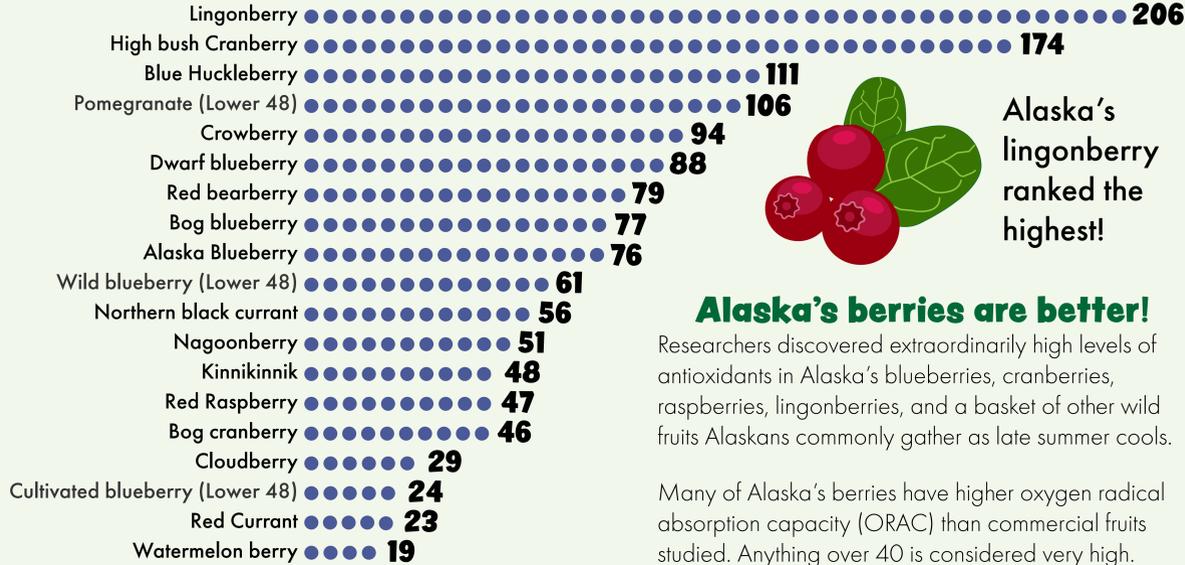
Berry Berry Tasty



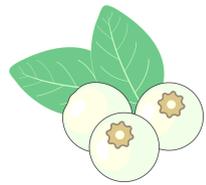
Berry Berry Healthy

- ✓ Naturally low in fat, sodium, and calories.
- ✓ Cholesterol free.
- ✓ Source of many essential nutrients, including dietary fiber, vitamin C and folic acid.

Antioxidants Scores for Alaska vs. Rest of U.S. Berries



Berry Berry Bad



Avoid white opaque berries in Alaska — they're all poisonous. Teach children to stay away from all berries unless with an adult.

Check your berries!



Berries sometimes contain the immature or resting life stage of insects. Often, affected berries are wrinkled or deformed.

How to evict bugs from your berry batch:

1. Pick through and discard these infested berries.
2. Or make a brine solution of ½ tsp salt to 1 gallon lukewarm water. Add berries and let stand for one hour. The worms will escape from the berries into the water. Then drain and rinse berries.



The most infamous poisonous berry in Alaska is the **baneberry** (*Actaea rubra*). Baneberries look a lot like highbush cranberries so look closely. The berries are often red, but can be white, with a black dot on the end. The seeds also differ with banberry's having a crescent-shape, while highbush cranberry seeds are a flattened oval shape.

Bears love berries too!



Always be aware that bears love berries, and stay alert for them. Make a lot of noise to alert bears of your presence, and know how to handle an encounter.

Know Bear Aware tips and stay safe:

- ✓ Carry bear spray and know how to use it.
- ✓ Stay in groups of 3 or more.
- ✓ Avoid Carcasses.
- ✓ Manage your food scent.



Learn more at www.blm.gov/alaska

References:
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