

Minnesota's Wild and Edible Fruits

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Wild fruits, found in many areas of Minnesota, may be used in food products including jam, jelly, syrup, and sauce. When picking wild fruits, use reliable publications to ensure correct identification of the species you plan to use.

Blueberry

(Vaccinium angustifolium)

This is a low bush growing from 1/2 to 2 feet high. It is found in sandy, dry soil in open woods and clearings. The round, dark-blue berries ripen in July and August. Uses include sauce, jam, jelly, and syrup.



Raspberry

(Rubus sp.)

This is a low, arching, prickly shrub from 1 to 5 feet high. It is found in thickets, clearings, borders of woods, and along roadsides throughout Minnesota. Raspberries ripen in July. Black raspberries' unripe fruit is first bright red, later turning black and edible. Uses include jam, jelly, sauce, and syrup.



Currant

(Ribes sp.)

This is a low shrub, 2 to 5 feet high, with smooth stems except for the swamp black currant. It is found in moist places, cool woods, and thickets. The fruit is very sour, round, smooth, and ranges in color from pink to dark red. It ripens in late June and July. It can be used for jelly and jam.



Gooseberry

(Ribes sp.)

This is a low prickly stemmed shrub growing from 2 to 5 feet high. It is found in moist places and on upland hills. The fruit is round, prickly, greenish-white to red-purple and ripens in July and August. Uses include sauce, jam, and jelly.



Juneberry

(Amelanchier sp.)

This plant is commonly known as Serviceberry or Saskatoon. It is a shrub or small tree growing 6 to 20 feet high with white 5-petaled blossoms. It is found on the edges of woods, moist ravines, and in valleys. The fruit, which ripens in late June or July, is round (resembles a blueberry), red when young, and purplish or almost black when mature. It can be used for jam, jelly, and sauce and also makes a fine beverage.



Elderberry

(Sambucus canadensis)

The common or American elderberry is a shrub growing from 4 to 12 feet tall. It is found in moist soils along roadsides, ditches, streams, and in fields. It has creamy clusters of tiny star-shaped flowers that become round, purplish-black berries in late summer and early fall. The fruit is used for jelly, pies, and wine.



Wild Plum

(Prunus americana)

This is a shrub or small tree growing from 3 to 20 feet high. It is found in thickets, along roadsides, pastures, riverbanks, and old farmsteads. The fruit has a sub-acid flavor, is round, red or yellow, and 1/2 inch to 1 inch in diameter. It ripens in August and September. It is used for sauce, pies, jelly, and preserves.



Highbush Cranberry

(Viburnum trilobum)

This shrub, despite its name, is not a cranberry. Found in cool woods, thickets, and swampy moist areas, it grows from 3 to 10 feet high. Its flowers are white. The round to oblong yellow to dark red berries contain one flat seed and ripen in September. Uncooked, the fruits are sour and bitter. Uses include sauce and jelly.



Wild Grape

(*Vitis riparia*)

This is a vine that climbs high into trees with tendrils that wind around twigs. It can be found along streams or in damp, cool woods. The fruit is a cluster of round, juicy, very sour, dark blue berries that ripen in September and October. Uses include juice, jelly, and syrup. The leaves can be used for various middle eastern dishes such as stuffed grape leaves.



Chokecherry

(*Prunus virginiana*)¹

This is a tall shrub or small tree growing up to 25 feet high. It can be found throughout Minnesota primarily along roadsides, edges of woods, and upland areas. The fruit is a round, dark-purple berry with an exceedingly astringent taste when fresh. The fruit ripens in July and August. It can be used for jelly, syrup, pies, preserves, and wine.



Sandcherry

(*Prunus sp.*)¹

This is a small, bushy shrub growing from 1 to 5 feet high. It is found in sandy, rocky situations throughout

Minnesota. The fruit is a round, astringent, somewhat oblong purple-black berry that ripens in July and August. Uses include sauce and wine.



Pin Cherry

(*Prunus Pennsylvanica*)¹

This is a tall shrub or a small tree growing from 20 to 30 feet high with light reddish-brown bark that is aromatic and bitter. It is found in burned-over regions and wooded areas. The berry is round and bright red; has sour, thin flesh; and contains a single seed or pit. It ripens in July and August. Uses include jelly, syrups, and wine.



For more information on using wild fruits, order University of Minnesota Extension Service publication #FS-1089, [Using Minnesota's Wild Fruits](#).

¹When using chokecherries, sandcherries, or pin cherries, extract juice from these fruits without crushing the seeds.

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