

Berries

Educator | VermontHarvestoftheMonth.org

Harvest of the Month provides resources for the cafeteria, classroom, and community to promote the use of local, seasonal foods.



Fun Facts

- Blueberries, raspberries and strawberries all grow in the wild and are cultivated in Vermont.
- The blue pigment in blueberries comes from a group of antioxidants called anthocyanins. The waxy coating on the surface of blueberries is called the “bloom”.
- Raspberry bushes have thorns—be wary!
- Native Americans called strawberries “heartseed berries” and ground them into cornmeal bread. Inspired by this recipe, colonists created a similar version, referred to today as strawberry shortcake.

Reading Corner

- *Berries, Nuts and Seeds*, by Diane Burns
- *Blueberries For Sal*, by Robert McCloskey
- *Jamberry*, by Bruce Degen
- *Raspberries!*, by Jay O’Callahan
- *The Berry Book*, by Gail Gibbons
- *The Blackberry Patch*, by Gine D’Andrea

Berry History and Culture

Blueberries:

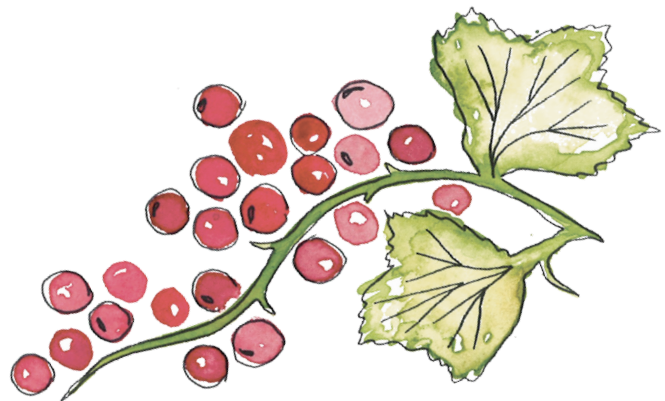
Blueberries are native to North America; the wild varieties of the plant are referred to as lowbush and the cultivated varieties as highbush. Native Americans used blueberries to season ceremonial pemmican, a mixture of dried elk, bison, or deer meat powder and melted fat. Blueberries are a true berry: the seeds and flesh are produced from a single ovary. Blueberries are a member of the heath family, which includes cranberries and huckleberries.

Raspberries:

Raspberries are believed to be native to East Asia. Brought by the Crusaders from Turkey, the red raspberry was the first variety to be cultivated in Europe. Raspberries exist in a spectrum of colors: red, black, yellow, orange, amber, and white. The raspberry is not a true berry, as it is produced from the merging of several ovaries.

Strawberries:

Strawberries are native to temperate zones in Europe and North and South America. The strawberry is also not a true berry, in the botanical sense. The flesh we eat is actually a swollen part of the stem, called the receptacle.



Berries

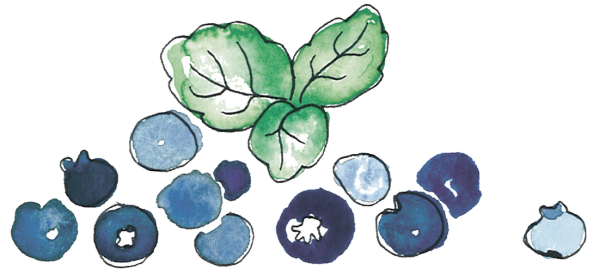
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Benefits

Blueberries: A good source of vitamin C, potassium, sodium, and fiber.

Raspberries: An excellent source of vitamin C and fiber. **Strawberries:** An excellent source of vitamin C and a good source of potassium.

Sources: Food Cultures of the World Encyclopedia, Volume 1, by Ken Albala, The Visual Food Encyclopedia, <http://cals.arizona.edu/fps/COTW> and <http://www.seattleschools.org/>



Classroom Connections

Language Arts

Introducing Berries

Supplies needed: images of berry plants, fresh berries

Directions: Describe a blueberry, strawberry, or raspberry to someone who has never seen or eaten one before. Set the scene, include details about the entire plant, and provide specifics about the berry's color, shape, taste, and texture. Source: Abbey Kalman, English teacher at U-32 Jr/Sr High School and GMFTS

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Math & Science

Plant Observation & Data Collection

Supplies needed: journal page with chart, pencil

Directions:

1. Visit your school garden or a berry farm to observe berry plants.
2. If you have not explored plant parts before, use an illustration or a live example to indicate leaves, buds, flowers and fruits.
3. Count the number of leaves, buds, flowers, and fruits on one stem; then count the total number of stems and approximate the total number of leaves, buds, flowers, and fruits. Observation clue for buds: look for young, small leaves.
4. If able, compare and contrast numbers between different kinds of berry plants.
5. If time permits, insert pollinators and pollination into the discussion. Why do pollinators visit flowers? Food: nectar and pollen. Why do plants have flowers? Need to attract pollinators to fertilize eggs.

Source: Math in the Garden: Hands-On Activities That Bring Math to Life