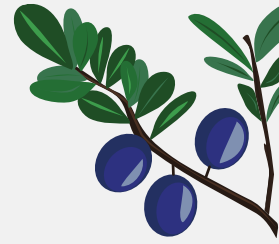


Family Guide to Native Berries

Looking for a fun way to start an edible garden? Try planting a patch of native berries!

Native plants have evolved and adapted to local conditions, such as winter's cold and summer's heat — and berry plants are no exception. Once established, they often require less maintenance than other common edibles. Native berry plants have evolved alongside native wildlife and have developed intricate relationships, such as providing birds, animals, and insects with food and shelter. Also, native berries are often more resistant to common insect pests and diseases compared to non-native plants. These traits make native berry plants a great choice for your family's edible gardening adventures!



Notable berry plants native to the Americas include:



Wild Blueberries

These low-growing shrubs grow in acidic soils in northern areas of the country. They need acidic soil to thrive and are hardy in USDA Zones 2 to 8.



Blackberries/Raspberries

Shrubby plants with long, thorny branches, these berries are adaptable and readily spread. Hardy in USDA Zones 4 to 9.



Cranberries

Low-growing cranberries form a groundcover or short shrub. Although grown commercially in bogs, they can also be grown in moist, acidic soil. Hardy in USDA Zones 4 to 7.



Serviceberry/Juneberry

Depending on where you live in the country, you may know plants in the Amelanchier family as serviceberries or juneberries. A shrub to small tree, this plant can provide an attractive addition to your landscape in addition to offering small, sweet berries to you and to local wildlife.



Strawberries

Small, spreading plants, strawberries are a good option for container gardens and raised beds. Most varieties grow well in USDA Zones 5 to 9. Some plants will produce one crop per year; other "everbearing" types produce multiple harvests.

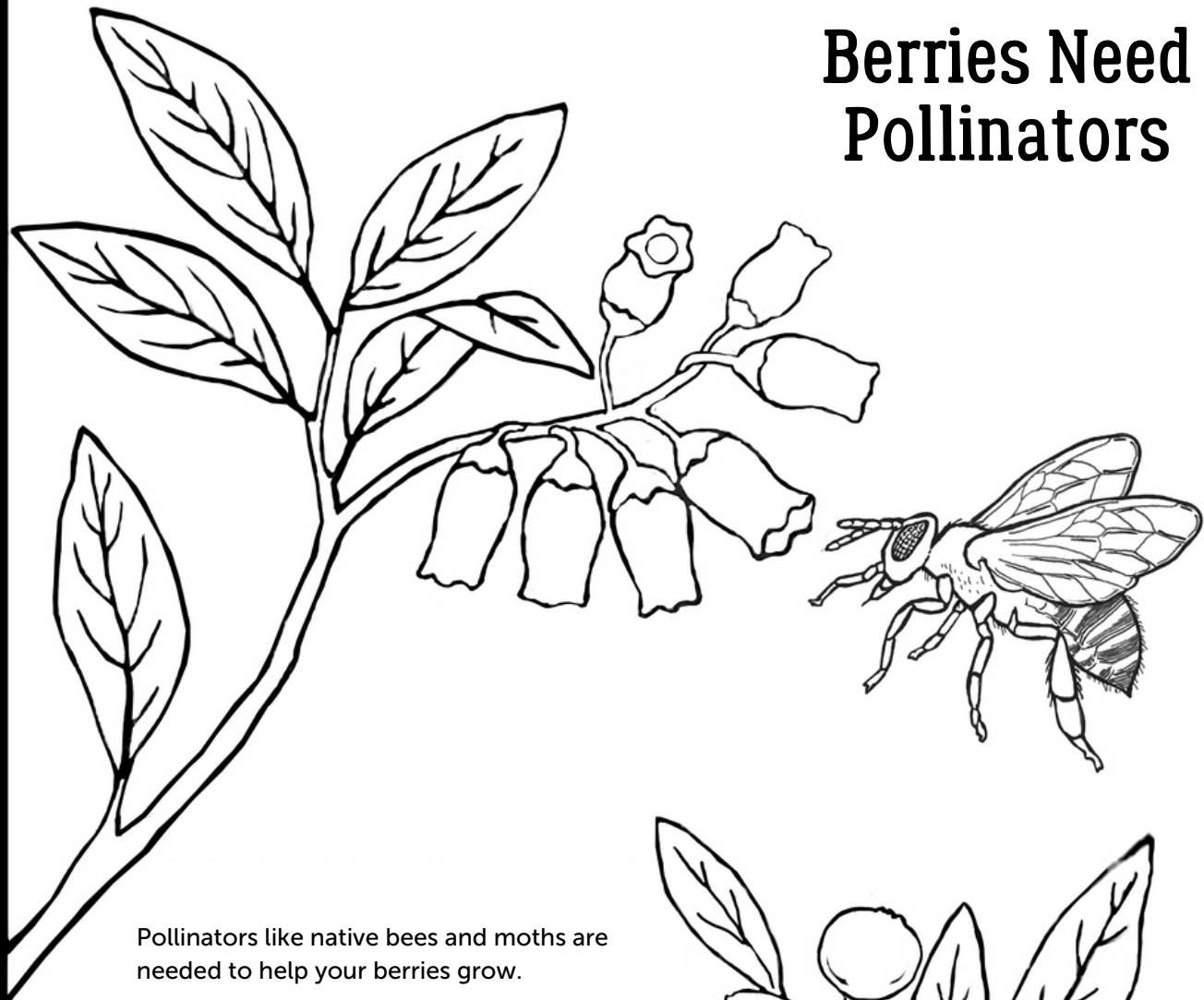
How to start your native berry garden

To build excitement, involve your kids in each stage of the garden installation from planning to maintenance.

Basic steps include:

- Select a site. Most berries like full sun and acidic, well-draining soil. If you do not have a suitable in-ground spot, consider container gardening.
- Research berry plants native to your area. Your local native plant society or Master Gardeners can help. Discover the growing requirements and size at maturity for your prospects. Note that some berries produce the best harvest if grown in groups of 2 or more to ensure adequate pollination. Use your research to select berries that will grow best in the conditions of your site.
- Locate native berry plant suppliers in your area. Never dig up wild plants unless you're rescuing them from a spot where they are in danger of being destroyed, such as a construction site.
- Plant and take care of your new plants -- even native plants need a little TLC until they are well established! Keep the soil moist and weed out uninvited plant intruders that may compete for water and nutrients.
- Enjoy your garden! Spend time with your kids observing the berry plants throughout the seasons and the wildlife they attract. Share your harvest with family and friends!

Berries Need Pollinators



Pollinators like native bees and moths are needed to help your berries grow.

This bumblebee is gathering nectar from a wild blueberry flower. In the process, it moves pollen from one flower to another.

Only pollinated flowers will produce berries!

