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Juneberry, Shadbush, Serviceberry *(Amelanchier species)*



Shad

From [*Identifying and Harvesting Edible and Medicinal Plants in Wild \(and Not So Wild\) Places*](#)

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Service



Juneberry Branches and Berries

The red, unripe berries, as well as the blue, mature ones, are good to eat.

These diverse shrubs or small trees have smooth to slightly furrowed, ash-gray to blackish bark, often beautifully adorned by curving, vertical, dark gray

stripes.



Juneberry Bark

The shrub's smooth tight bark, decorated with vertical stripes, makes the genus easy to recognize, even in the winter.

The alternate, oval, finely-toothed, medium-sized, stalked leaves are about 2" long, with slightly downy, light green undersides on some species.

The five-petaled, white flowers usually bloom early in the spring, before the leaves appear. Radially-symmetrical and about 3/4" across, they resemble apple blossoms, with many conspicuous stamens.

**Juneberry Blossom**

Many pollen-bearing male stamens surround the single, central, female stigma of this radially symmetrical, 5-petaled white flower, similar to the related [apple](#) blossom.

The blossoms hang from long, sparse, racemes.



Juneberry Flower Cluster

The flowers alternate along the stalk.

The shrub is called the Juneberry because the fruit ripens in June. It's also called serviceberry because it blooms when in mid-April, when long-delayed religious services were held throughout 19th century New England, as snow covered roads became accessible again. But not everyone was religious, and others would just as soon go fishing, especially when the first run of shad migrated upstream from the ocean, heralded by the blooming shadbush.



Juneberry Blossoms

The oval, finely toothed (serrated) leaves are only starting to develop when the flowers bloom.

The blue-black, round berries, which are red before they ripen, are about 1/4-1/3" across, the size of blueberries, which they resemble. They even have the crown^oa frilled opening on the end away from the fruit stalk.



Cluster of Juneberries

These sweet, juicy berries taste even better than they look!

Inside are soft, almond-flavored seeds, absent in blueberries. Also, blueberries have bell-like flowers, and different bark.

There are many native and some European species growing throughout much of the United States and Canada.



Cluster of Red Juneberries (*A. alnifolia*, var. *Ballerina*)

Atypically, the tasty fruit of this English species, with red rather than blue berries, and often planted as an ornamental in cultivated parks, ripens in autumn.

Although many have delicious fruit, some have bad-tasting berries. There are no poisonous look-alikes, since no poisonous berry has a crown, but a careless beginner could still confuse Juneberries with crownless poisonous and non-poisonous berries. These are described under Blueberries.



Red Juneberry, split open

Note the teardrop-shaped, reddish-brown seeds.

Keep your eyes open for these inconspicuous woodland treasures from June through August. Most species ripen in late spring, but others come into season later. Different species favor varying habitats. Some grow on hillsides, others inhabit lowlands, while a few tolerate saltwater, and grow within yards of the sea. Look for juneberries in moist and somewhat dry soil, in woods, along streams and lakes, on mountains, in thickets, clearings, cultivated parks, and on the grounds of landscaped garden apartment complexes.

Juneberries are a great surprise the first time you try them. With no similar commercial relatives, these delicious berries, related to apples, are quite unique. Although they'd been sold in the marketplace in the past, they're almost completely forgotten today. The fruit has a strong, sweet and penetrating flavor, a little like pears, while the soft seeds add a nutty, almond-like flavor.

Some years there are excellent crops, but in other years, you can hardly find any berries. These shrubs are somewhat finicky about their requirements. Also, in some places, birds attack the fruit as soon as it ripens, joyously taking little bits from each berry.

It takes me a long time to gather juneberries, especially since I can't help eating two berries for every one heading for my pail. I usually supplement them in a recipe with other fruits, to stretch them.

Make your favorite blueberry muffin recipe using juneberries. It will be different and fantastic. I've made my best cobblers with this fruit. They also make great jam. They contain pectin, so you don't need much thickener. The Indians, who used them like blueberries, dried them and added them in stews and pemmican.

Iroquois women used the fruit as a blood remedy, to strengthen the body after the pain of childbirth. They drank a root and bark decoction to prevent miscarriage. They also used it to expel parasitic intestinal worms, as did the Chinese.

[Juneberry Recipes](#)

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