



Rose hips

Harvesting the wild of Wyoming

NATIVE, FREE and DELICIOUS

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Some of us are just naturally scavengers – we know where to find the biggest fish, the local orchards, the farm stands, and the best berry patches. Don't overlook Wyoming's native fruit when scavenging – it is high in nutrition and free for the picking.

Native fruit tends to ripen and mature first at lower elevations then at higher elevations. Harvest season can be a month or more. Here are 10 native fruits that can be harvested for jam, jellies, and pie. Fruit can also be dried, canned, or frozen. Look for food preservation classes at your local UW Extension office. Find one at uwyo.edu/ces.

Black chokecherry

The black chokecherry (*Prunus virginiana* var. *melanocarpathe*) is a tall, multi-stemmed shrub found throughout Wyoming, usually less than 15 feet tall, with white, five-petal flowers in a raceme (a long cylindrical shape). Chokecherry blooms from May to June and ripens from August to September depending upon elevation. Ripe fruit is round and black. Chokecherry usually occurs in clumps in the foothills but may grow near streams in drier areas. **Note that stems, leaves, and the pit are all poisonous.**

Remove stems and leaves before processing and use only the soft flesh around the pit

in recipes. Leaves are oval with an abruptly pointed tip. Stems are reddish brown and covered with distinct, white, raised bumps (lenticels).

American plum

One of the earliest flowering fruits is the American plum, (*Prunus Americana*) a 3- to 5-foot-tall tree native to Wyoming. Find them when they bloom in late April or early May. Plums occur in drainage areas – draws, ravines, canyons of the plains, and foothills. Plum and chokecherry are similar in appearance because they are in the same genus. The serrated leaves are very similar to chokecherry leaves; in fact, the young leaves of chokecherries are almost identical to a plum leaf. Older plum leaves, however, taper more gradually toward the tip than older chokecherry leaves. Woody stems of plums are distinctly different from the reddish chokecherry stems. Young plum stems are brown, turning gray as they mature, and the raised lenticels are not as distinct as those found on chokecherry. Flowering plum trees have individual flowers, usually white or slightly pinkish, scattered throughout the tree. Plum fruits are up to ¾-inch in diameter and are individually scattered. The green fruit develops an orange to a pink or reddish blush as it ripens.

BERRY DELICIOUS

Now that you've wild fruit in hand, here's how to preserve them for enjoyment throughout the long winter! View this University of Wyoming bulletin <http://bit.ly/wyowildberries>



Serviceberry

Serviceberry is also called juneberry in the West. Three species of serviceberry are found in Wyoming: Saskatoon serviceberry (*Amelanchier alnifolia*), Utah serviceberry (*Amelanchier utahensis*), and dwarf serviceberry (*Amelanchier pumila*). They are found on open hillsides from foothills to subalpine areas. Serviceberries can grow up to 15 feet tall, but some plants seldom attain this height because deer heavily browse them. White, star-shaped blooms appear in clusters called racemes in late April to late May. Leaves are oval to nearly round. Leaves are serrated and dark green on top and paler underneath. The fruit is a small berry-like pome (or small apple). The immature red fruit turns a dark purple to black when it ripens in mid-July to mid-August. Serviceberry will have a star-shaped arrangement of sepals at the tip of the berry – just like an apple.

Woods' rose

The Woods' rose (*Rosa woodsii*) is the most common native rose shrub found in Wyoming. Other species in Wyoming include the prickly rose (*Rosa acicularis*), prairie rose (*Rosa arkansana*), and Nootka rose (*Rosa nutkana*). The fruits of all these species are edible through the year and were an important source of vitamin C for the native people and early explorers of the Rocky Mountains. Blooms of wild roses are usually light to dark pink, or even

red, with five petals and five sepals. Roses bloom in June to July. Shrubs are 3 to 4 feet high and found in open to wooded habitats. Rose hips ripen in late August to September, are bright orange to red in color, and range in flavor from tasteless to sweet. Dried rose hips persist on plants and remain edible throughout the winter. Although never bitter, they are very seedy.



Buffaloberry

Buffaloberry

Buffaloberry is a thorny shrub found on bottomland and stream banks in foothills and plains. Two species of buffaloberry are found in Wyoming: silver buffaloberry (*Shepherdia argentea*) and russet buffaloberry (*Shepherdia Canadensis*). Buffaloberry shrubs grow 8 to 10 feet high and are similar to another member of the same plant family, Russian olive, in appearance having oblong, blunt-shaped leaves. Silver buffaloberry leaves have a distinct sage coloration similar to Russian olive. Russet buffaloberry leaves are dark green on the upper surface and fuzzy underneath. Non-descript, small flowers, yellowish to pale green, bloom in April to May. Pale orange to bright red fruit ripens in late July to early August. Silver buffaloberries make better jams and jellies than russet buffaloberry, which is bitter. Although suitable for jams and jellies, raw russet buffaloberries have a soapy taste and can cause diarrhea if consumed in large quantities.

Wild currants

Three main species of wild currants are in Wyoming. All three are small shrubs growing to a maximum height of 5 feet. Currants ripen mid-July to August. Black currant (*Ribes hudsonianum*) is found in moist, shady locations in stands of timber or along streams. Leaves have three to five lobes and look like a small maple leaf. Leaves are serrated around the entire edge of the leaf. White flowers

are funnel shaped, and black berries are very sweet. Golden currant (*Ribes aureum*) is found in open, sunny areas. Leaves have three to five blunt or rounded lobes, without serrations around the lower portion of the leaf. Flowers are bright yellow, and berries can be yellow, orange, red, or purple. You should sample the berries of each shrub to test the flavor, which may be sweet or bitter. The berries from wax currant shrubs (*Ribes cereum*) are not recommended for making jams and jellies. Wax currant berries, orange to red, are usually very bitter.

Gooseberry

Gooseberries are closely related to currants but have prickles or thorns on the stem. You may want to wear gloves when harvesting them. Green gooseberries are sour

but very flavorful as they ripen to a reddish purple color. Most people prefer gooseberries over currants for making pies and jams. Gooseberries occur most often on flood plains and along streams. There are two species of gooseberry in Wyoming: both are small shrubs that generally do not exceed 3 feet in height. Canadian gooseberry (*Ribes oxycanthoides*) has rust-colored younger shoots covered with fine spines while older grayish stems have one to three large spines at the base of leaves. Whitestem gooseberry (*Ribes inerme*) has very few thorns at the base of leaves of older white stems; however, young shoots are covered with fine spines. Leaves are three to five lobed with blunt tips. Whitestem gooseberry tends to produce slightly larger fruit

(up to ½ to ¾ inch in diameter) than that of Canadian gooseberry. Small, bell-shaped flowers, usually white with a pale greenish-yellow tint, bloom in May. Gooseberries ripen from green to pink to deep purple in mid-July to mid-August. Fruit has the dried flower attached to one end.

For information:

Preserving Food in Wyoming: Wild Berries and other wild fruit, University of Wyoming Extension Bulletin, B-1210.3, 2011

Vascular Plants of Wyoming, Robert D. Dorn, illustrated by Jane L. Dorn, Third Edition, 2001.

The Rocky Mountain Berry Book, Bob Krumm, A Falcon Field Guide, Globe Pequot Press, Helena, MT, 1991.

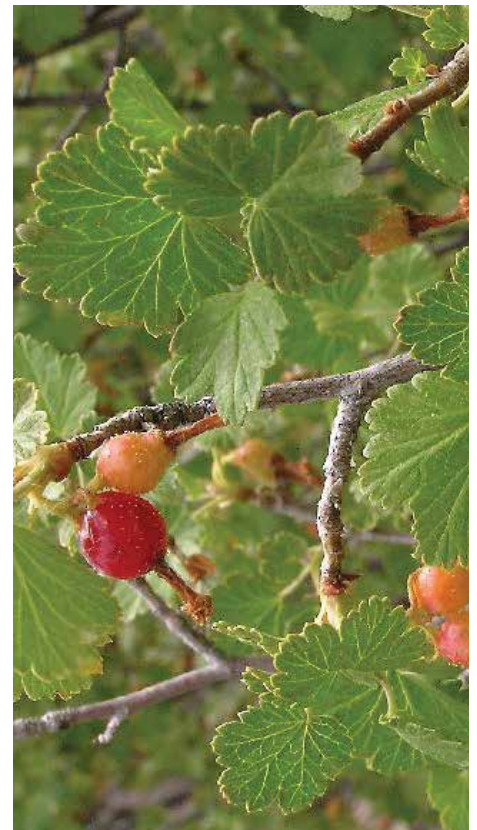
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Gooseberry



Serviceberry



Waxy currant