

Vaccinium uliginosum L.

Bog blueberry, Alpine blueberry

Iñupiaq = “**asriavik**”

Yup'ik = “**curaq**”

Cup'ig = “**cur'at**”

Siberian Yup'ik = “**Syugak**”

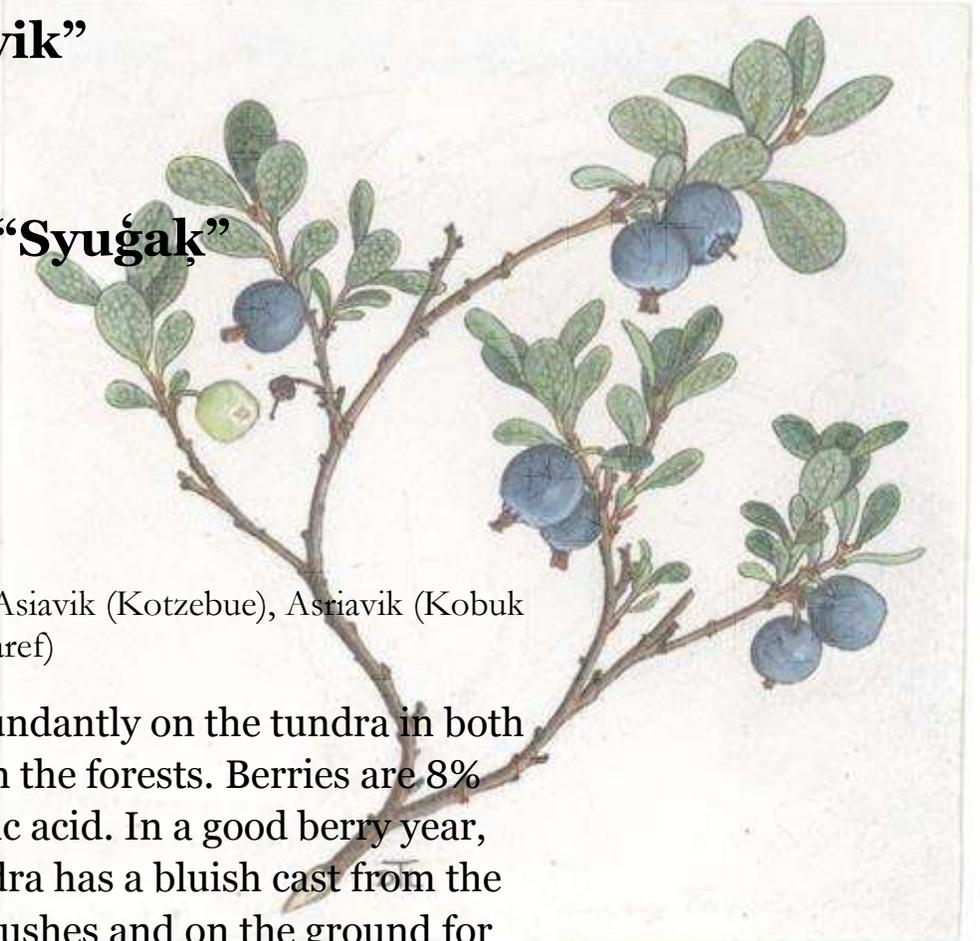
Edible Parts: Fruit

Harvest: Summer

Asiak (North Slope villages), Asiavik (Kotzebue), Asriavik (Kobuk river villages), Sugak (Shishmaref)

Bog blueberry grows abundantly on the tundra in both wet and dry areas, and in the forests. Berries are 8% sugar and rich in ascorbic acid. In a good berry year, the otherwise green tundra has a bluish cast from the berries. They freeze on bushes and on the ground for mice and ptarmigan to eat all winter and remain, dried and sweet, for bears birds and people to eat next spring.

Traditionally, blueberries are eaten either fresh, if they are not plentiful, or stored in barrels and sealskin pokes. They are difficult to preserve, quickly molding and fermenting, and can bubble over a barrel overnight if not stirred down twice a day.





Yup'ik Elders Foraging Principles:

Don't think too much about bears and other dangerous animals (or mention them aloud). It might make them come.





Photo by Cheryl Wood



GrabandgoRecipes.com



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Recipe for pickled fish in blueberries

1. Clean, cut, hang to dry for 3 days some fat trout or whitefish. It is best if they are uniform size. This drying is necessary to toughen the fish so it won't fall apart. (Contemporary note: or you can brine them overnight in a salt solution.)
2. Cut into uniform pieces, perhaps 2 inches by 4-6 inches.
3. Remove bloody spoiled or thick pieces
4. Mix into the blueberry juice or juicy blueberries, either fresh or from last year.
5. Be sure the juice surrounds each piece and amply covers them so they are loose and can be stirred easily.
6. Store in *sigluaq* or refrigerator; keep cold.
7. Stir them gently every day.
8. Eat the berries, juice, and fish all together as pickles with a meal, or with sugar for a dessert.
9. You can tell when it is ready to eat when the color goes all the way through the fish. To check, cut a few pieces and

Sources: *Plants that We Eat: Nauriat Nigiñaqtuat* : from the *Traditional Wisdom of the Iñupiat Elders of Northwest Alaska* by Anore Jones; *The Boreal Herbal: Wild food and medicine plants of the North* by Beverly Gray; *A guide to the ethnobotany of the Yukon Kuskokwim Region* edited by Kevin Jernigan of University of Alaska Fairbanks-

Ethnobotany guide was compiled by Chicago Botanic Garden interns Charlotte Crowder and Jennifer MacMillan during their 2015 summer internship with the Alaska Center for Conservation Science at UAA.