

Fresh Story | Wild Blueberries

Did you know. Nova Scotia is especially known for its production of wild blueberries, also known as low bush blueberries. In North America, about 120 million pounds of blueberries are produced each year, with Nova Scotia contributing to one quarter (30 million lbs)!! Wild blueberries grow very well in acidic soil, where other food crops struggle to survive.



Wild blueberries have been important to the Mi'kmaq for thousands of years. Mi'kmaq ate the wild blueberries fresh or dried, and used their vibrant blue dyes in a variety of crafts and tools. For more information on this topic, check out "Pkwiman: Wild Blueberries in Mi'kmaki and Wabanaki" from Agriculture in the Classroom Nova Scotia <https://novascotia.ca/programs/Pkwiman-Wild-Blueberry/>

The "blue" in blueberries is more than just a vibrant colour. The pigment that makes this rich blue colour is called anthocyanin (antho = flowering plant, cyanin = blue). Wild blueberries have high levels of anthocyanins, which are associated with many health benefits. Because of this anthocyanin content, wild blueberries have earned the reputation of "superfruit". **Wild blueberries can help to regulate blood sugar, reduce risk of cardiovascular disease, aid in reducing bodily inflammation, and even support brain health.**



Wild blueberries are dependent on pollinators like bees to help them grow.

Wild blueberry fields are great for native pollinators, since they provide an abundance of pollen and nectar. Some insects move from plant to plant to eat nectar, and transport pollen to different flowers as they do so. Other insects, like honeybees, which are non-native to North America, collect the pollen across many plants in order to make honey. Farmers use honeybees to help pollinate a variety of crops, including wild blueberries. For more information on this topic, check out "[A Pollinator's Habitat](#)" from Agriculture in the Classroom Nova Scotia.



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Activities for P – Grade 3

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS –

Learners can have a talking circle with the class or in small groups to come up with different adjectives to describe the blueberries they are eating. This could include a word cloud, round robin style, a talking stick, or creating a list, etc. The teacher can use the opportunity to discuss why we use adjectives to describe something and could vary in complexity based on the grade level.

SCIENCE – Teachers can lead a discussion with learners about connections to blueberries being a living thing. What makes them a living thing? Learners can draw the lifecycle of a blueberry plant.

VISUAL ART – Learners can create blueberry fields using fingerprints and sponges. Fingertips or the tops of pencils can be used to create the blueberries, learners can use sponges or paint brushes to add in the stems and leaves. Pollinators such as bees and butterflies are attracted to the sweet smell and odours that plants produce. Blueberry flowers are not bright and colourful like cherry blossoms or the sunflowers in your garden, but insects still love them! Create a scene in a blueberry field to show as many pollinators as you can enjoying the blueberry field!

<https://www.theyrenotourgoats.com/tag/blueberry-crafts/>

Activities for Grade 4-6

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

– In addition to researching or considering the many health benefits that wild blueberries provide, students could use their communication skills to verbally describe or to write out instructions to creating a simple dish that incorporates wild blueberries, such as a blueberry parfait or a blueberry smoothie.

SOCIAL STUDIES – Learners can investigate the cultural and economic significance behind the blueberry harvest in Mi'kmaki. Learners can investigate where wild blueberries are traditionally grown, why they grow so well in Nova Scotia, and their impact on Nova Scotia's economy today.

MATHEMATICS – Students can be challenged with blueberry math problems relating to multiplication and division. For example: Farmer Sam grows blueberries. On average, they yield 450 blueberries per square metre of field. Sam's field is 80 square meters. Approximately how many blueberries will Sam harvest this year?

SCIENCE – Learners can investigate what factors are necessary for optimum plant growth for blueberries (pollination), where do blueberries grow best, when? How do changes in the weather affect how the blueberries grow? How does the plant change over time?

