



BLUEBERRY & CRANBERRY TALKING POINTS

2. Blueberry & Cranberry History

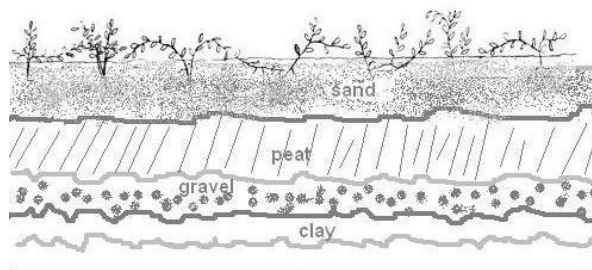
- Botanists estimate that **blueberries burst onto the scene more than 13,000 years ago, in what is now North America**. Native Americans enjoyed blueberries year-round. They dried blueberries in the sun and added them whole to soups, stews and meat, and even crushed them into a powder to use on meat as a preservative.
- Native Americans called blueberries “star berries” because the blossom end of each berry – the calyx – forms a perfect five-pointed star. Tribal elders recounted how the Great Spirit sent “star berries” to ease the children’s hunger during a famine. And according to legend, Native Americans gave blueberries to the pilgrims to help them make it through their first winter.
- **Cranberries were first used by Native Americans**, who discovered the wild berry's versatility as a food, fabric dye and healing agent.
- The name "cranberry" derives from the Pilgrim name for the fruit, "craneberry", so called because the small, pink blossoms that appear in the spring resemble the head and bill of a Sandhill crane.
- American whalers and mariners carried cranberries on their voyages to prevent scurvy (caused by a lack of vitamin C).
- In the USA, Cranberries were first cultivated in the early 1800's and blueberries in the early 1900's.



3. & 4. How do Blueberries & Cranberries grow? (What plant part do we eat?)

- **Blueberries grow on bushes** that are often planted in long rows. The bushes can grow up to 12 feet tall, but most peak at about 6 feet.
- In the spring, clusters of beautiful **white blossoms pop up all over the bushes and are pollinated by bees. Each blossom eventually becomes one blueberry** – first hard and green, then reddish-purple, and finally blue, sweet and ready to eat!
- For the fresh market, blueberries are mainly picked by hand, but some are gathered with large harvesting machines that move slowly along the rows of blueberry plants and gently shake each one so ripe berries fall into a catching frame. (Most machine-harvested berries are washed, frozen and sold in stores year-round.)
- The **cranberry is a Native American wetland fruit which grows on trailing vines on a bush** like a strawberry. The vines thrive on the special combination of soils and water properties found in wetlands. Wetlands are nature's sponges; they store and purify water and help to maintain the water table. Cranberries grow in beds layered with sand, peat and gravel. These beds are commonly known as bogs or marshes and were originally formed as a result of glacial deposits.

- In Massachusetts the place where cranberries grow is a BOG.
- In the early 1800s, Henry Hall noticed that sand blown in from nearby dunes helped vines grow faster. Today, growers spread an inch or two of sand on their bogs every three years. The sand not only helps the vines grow but also slows the growth of weeds and insects.
- Normally, growers do not replant each year since an undamaged cranberry vine will survive indefinitely. **Some cranberry vines on Cape Cod are more than 150 years old** and are still bearing fruit.



5. What season do we pick berries?

- While South Dakota does not have ideal soil conditions for growing blueberries, some gardeners/small farmers can grow them after adding nutrients to the soil.
- In South Dakota gardeners/small farmers can also grow a special variety of cranberries, called a High Bush Cranberry, which does not require the wetland boggy conditions to grow.
- For those that grow **them in South Dakota, blueberries are harvested during the summer and cranberries are harvested in the fall.**
- On the east coast, where a lot of cranberry bogs are the harvest is from September-November.

6. Why should we eat cranberries and blueberries?

	Blueberry % Daily Value	Cranberry % Daily Value
Vitamin K	36%	7%
Vitamin C	24%	22%
Fiber	14%	20%
Manganese	2%	1%

How Much Do I Need?

- A ½ cup of berries is about one cupped handful.
- **A ½ cup of most berries every day (blueberries, strawberries, blackberries, raspberries) is a good source of vitamin C and fiber.**
- Berries are rich in phytochemicals, which come from plants and may help you stay healthy.
- The amount of fruits and vegetables you need depends on your age, gender, and physical activity level. all forms of fruits and vegetables count toward your daily needs – fresh, frozen, canned, dried, and 100% juice!
- Cranberries contain bacteria-blocking compounds that are believed to be helpful in preventing urinary tract infections, and scientists now think this same function may be useful in blocking the bacteria responsible for ulcers and certain oral bacteria that can lead to gum disease.

- In addition to their urinary tract health benefits, cranberries also contain Phytochemical that may assist in maintaining health. Scientists believe that it is the combined actions of many different phytochemicals that contribute to their overall effects, and cranberries are rich in these compounds. Some of these phytochemicals act as antioxidants, compounds that help neutralize harmful free radicals in the body. These antioxidants reduce oxidative damage to cells that can lead to cancer, heart disease, and other degenerative diseases.
- Scientific studies show that blueberries contain a category of phytonutrients called polyphenols. This group includes anthocyanins which give blueberries their blue color. Research suggests that polyphenols have antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties that can play an important role in helping to lessen the inflammatory process associated with chronic conditions like cardiovascular disease, cancer, and age-related cognitive decline.

7. How do you pick good berries?

- Choose blueberries or cranberries that are that are plump and have a solid, dark color.
- Rinse them under running water just before eating.
- Blueberries and cranberries can be stored in the fridge for a few days.
- Shop for fresh berries in season for the best value.

Sources:

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