

Nature Notes

How to be Berry-wise in the Nature Park



There are over thirty different plants in the nature park that produce berries. The berries are (of course) one of the ways plants scatter their seeds. Some of the plants that produce berries are flowered such as Queens Cup and Twisted Stock but most of them are shrubs.

Besides human use over the centuries many animals and birds depend on berries as part of their diet. Guess who eats Grouseberries? Have you ever given up your Huckleberry patch to a bear?

The native people have used berries in many different ways. All native groups in the Southern interior ate Thimbleberries mixing them with Raspberries, but these berries don't dry well. Soopolallie is the Chinook word for soap because the berry pulp is soapy to the touch. The interior natives whipped up the berries with a little bit of water for 'Indian ice-cream'. Saskatoons were the most popular and widely used berry for southern interior tribes. Dried Saskatoons were a common trading item besides eaten fresh or dried into cakes. Gooseberries and Chokecherries were also used and of course Huckleberries and Blueberries.

Kinnikinnick is a widespread and common shrub that has bright red berries that ripen late and remain on the plants well into winter. This provides food for birds, bears and other wildlife. Native people fried the berries in salmon or bear fat or boiled them in soups.

Some of the berries aren't as friendly such as Devil's club and Baneberry. Baneberries are highly poisonous and the native name for this berry means 'sick'. Some native groups believed that Black Twinberries were poisonous and would make one crazy. Snowberries were not eaten by any native people.

So keep an eye out for the berries and have a berry good time in the park.