

# JUST FRUITS: HONEYBERRY



**HONEYBERRY**  
*LONICERA CAERULEA V. EDULIS*

RECOMMENDED CULTIVARS INCLUDE  
BOREALIS BLUE FOREST, BLUE MOON, BLUE  
PACIFIC, AND BLUE BIRD.

## Ecology



Member of the Lonicera (honeysuckle) genre, circumpolar plant, antequely native to the Kamchatka Peninsula of Russia. Zone 3, hardy to -40 degrees F. Sun or shade, though prefers full sun in northern climates.

Compact, shrub 4 1/2 - 8 ft, with oblong berries 1/2 - 3/4 inc in length. Attractive dark green foliage, leaves opposite, simple, ovate, followed by delicate yellow/white flowers in summer, with deep blue berries arriving in June - September (depending on area), followed by very vivacious golden fall foliage. Serrated leaves elongated, 2 - 5" and attached to stem on red petioles. Hardy kiwi also play an important role as food for migrating songbirds and as a resilient paper material, or decorative wreath.

## Primary pollinator

Need 2 different cultivars to ensure pollination, by bees. Fruiting depends on availability of pollinators when plants are blooming.

## Flower

Difloral inflorescence. Delicate yellow/white flowers.

## Fruit

Compound Impressively, honeyberries typically require 1 growing season. The fruit bears exceptionally early - about 2 weeks before the first strawberries appear.

## Soil

Uncomplaining, in terms of soil preference, drought tolerant, and can survive a wide range of acidity; 3.9 - 7.7 pH with optimum 5.5 - 6.5.

## WHY GROW HONEYBERRY?

Although honeyberries are not currently commercially available, many fruit growers are convinced that this comely and tasty berry will be the broadly feted darling of farmer markets, CSA's, grocery stores, and nurseries in the coming decades. Given it's limited availability in the U.S., finding good honeyberry root stock is a challenge, though Jung's Garden Center, and Honeyberry USA and Burnt Ridge Nursery all offer plants for sale. Berries Unlimited also offer micropropagated plants. Known as zhimolost in Russia, haskap in japan and Canada, and honeyberry in the U.S., visually and most feel, culinarily, akin to the blueberry, the honeyberry, resembles an elongated blueberry, dented at the nether end. Honeyberries are mightily hardy, drought tolerant, with few pest and disease issues, the fruit offers much potential to the organic orchardist. Berries produced on compact, 5 foot shrubs in easy to harvest clusters, each berry containing not only a tiny edible seed, but a significant load of antioxidants as well (again think blueberry). For a good crop, plant 4 - 5 species together to ensure pollination. Plant honeyberries on 4 - 6 ft. spacing between rows. On our farm, we include honeyberries in the shrub layer of our Forest Garden Guilds and plant on the dripline of our quince and apple trees, 5 ft. from center and 3 ft in

between plants. Maintenance is also minimal, though your biggest challenge will be keeping the birds from eating all your berries. Tent Caterpillars left our shrubs untouched, and Deer ignore them! Overplant or use netting (1/2" cross-wires to prevent birds from getting tangled) to keep the wildlife at bay. Despite its drought tolerance, water heavily a couple of times/year during the first few years to promote deep root growth. Prune older branches in late winter or early spring, when shrub gets too dense, though never more than 25% of the shrub at a time. Honeyberry produces 7 - 10 lbs of berries after 5 years (berries grow on one year wood) and will produce over an average lifespan of 50 years. Harvest honeyberries using an umbrella or child's plastic pool or other sheeting material on the ground and shake the shrub until the berries drop! Make sure berries are a dark blue color throughout before harvest to ensure sweetest tastes. The fruit is used both fresh and in value added products such as jams, pastries, wine, and ice cream as well as for medicinal purposes. Little data exists regarding average direct market price/pound and is an area of research on our farm.





# Honeyberry- Social Benefits, Tastes, Potential Uses

Honeyberry, haskap, edible blue honeysuckle - whatever name it goes by, this fascinating fruit varies in taste from variety to variety, and exhibits an equally varied history of uses and benefits to cultures throughout the world. Highly valued in its native habitat of Transbaikalia, the mountainous region east of Lake Baikal in Russia and in Japan, where it is known as Haskap, this 'blue member of the honeysuckle family, in ancient times honeyberries were considered a priceless gift, and in the treatment of many ailments by using different parts of the plant: flowers, leaves and branches. 'Discovered by Russian traveler Vladimir Atlasov, near the end of the 17th century in Kamchatka Peninsula, underlined not only the quality of the berries but also their hardiness. Yet honeyberry wasn't first mentioned as a food plant of interest until 1894. Treasured and loved in Asia for centuries the berry came to Europe and was appreciated in its gardens because of its versatility. The Petersburg Botanical Garden in Russia has had the collection

of Honeysuckle ("zhimolost" in Russian) since the middle of 18 century. They were brought from all over the world and tested for hardiness and longevity. Honeyberry did not first become 'domesticated' until the early 1950's when the Vasilov Research Institute in St. Petersburg and the Siberian Horticultural Institute plunged into honeyberry hybridization with vigor and ultimately identifying some 500 different edible honeyberry types. It would take a few more decades of experimentation to render the berry palatable. Nonetheless, to date, the berries taste, (often referred to as blueberriesque with a hint of currant) is equally matched in taste and in its potential health benefits. Honeyberry has a healthy dose of vitamin C contents range from 50mg-100mg/100g of the berries, outranking the blue berries. Honeyberry is also an excellent source of polyphenolicx and anthocyanins (compounds shown to aid in the prevention of a number of chronic conditions such as cancer, diabetes and cardiovascular disease), comparable to

blueberry and currant species. Studies cited in the Journal of Agriculture Food Chemicals and the Canadian Journal of Physiology and Pharmacology, also revealed that honeyberry contains high amounts of unsaturated fatty acids (over 90%). The berries show much promise as a natural antioxidant, colorant, and a healthy addition to the North American berry palatte. Honeyberry's uses are many including, fresh eating, and products such as pastries, jams, juice, wine, ice cream, yogurt, sauces and candies. Frozen fruit melts in the mouth as the skin simply disintegrates, causing excitement amongst ice cream and smoothie makers as well as a simple pleasure to eaters.

*"One of the interesting side benefits of glasnost (political openness), which marked the restructuring of the Soviet Empire in 1986, was the introduction of the Russian-bred honeyberry to the world," Staub, 2007.*



The same plant will vary from year to year depending upon moisture, sunlight, and soil conditions. Like it's changing phenology, describing Honeyberry's fruit tastes remains a mystery and depends on your palette. Some describe the tastes as blueberry infused with black currant, others relay the tastes of cherry and even grape or kiwi. Whether you prefer your berries sweet or tart, employ honeyberries in the kitchen deliciously every way you would a blueberry, including over your cereal at breakfast, in ice cream, dolloped on your pancakes, or dry the berries for a taste of summer to beat the winter blues. Regardless, you'll have something horticulturally cutting edge to chat about at dinner.

## RECIPE SAMPLER -

### HONEYBERRY

Most honeyberry recipes I researched were used to compliment other dishes such as ice cream, jams, pancakes, and syrups. I thought I'd offer a few stand alone ideas for your experimenting with honeyberry in the kitchen including this one from Rose Hill Agroforestry  
Websites: <http://www.haskap.ca/>

#### Honeyberry Squares

- 1 cup brownn sugar
- 1 1/4 cups rolled oats
- 1 1/2 cups flour (all-purpose)
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 cup margarine
- 3 cups blue honeysuckle berries

### INNOVATIONS

- 3/4 cup sugar
  - 1 tablespoon lemon juice
  - 3 tablespoon cornstarch
- Combine honeysuckle berries, sugar, cornstarch, and lemon juice. Cook until thickened. Cool slightly. Mix brown sugar, rolled oats, flour, and baking soda. Cut in margarine until crumbly. Spread half the crumbs in a 9 x 13" baking pan. Evenly spread berry mixture over top. Top with remaining crumbs. Bake at 350 for about 30 minutes.

You can find additional honeyberry recipes from the Honeyberry USA website: [www.honeyberryusa.com/](http://www.honeyberryusa.com/)