



What is a BC blueberry?

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The BC-grown blueberry, delicious and sweet is also known as the highbush blueberry. It's the one that you'll find fresh at farmers markets and stands, "u-pick" farms and in grocery stores across the province in the summer, as well as being available frozen year-round.

BC blueberries **are not** lowbush blueberries, which are often marketed using the term "wild blueberries." This type of blueberry is common in the eastern provinces of Canada.

The BC highbush blueberry plant grows up to six feet tall, and may produce as many as 6,000 berries per year on a single plant. It is easily cultivated in rows, where one acre of plantings may produce up to 20 tons of fruit. Total plantings of highbush blueberries in British Columbia exceed 8,100 hectares (20,000 acres) grown by more than 800 local farmers.

The blueberry is just one of as many as 450 worldwide species of the genus *Vaccinium* – other examples include the cranberry, lingonberry and huckleberry. It is one of just a small handful of commercially-available fruits that is native to North America. Eaten by people for at least 13,000 years, its use in Canada was recorded as early as the 17th Century by French explorer Samuel de Champlain when blueberries were not just eaten for their sweet wholesome goodness. Amongst North American aboriginal peoples, blueberries were commonly used as medicine to treat various ailments, or dried and powdered to be used in the preservation of meat.

It is from this native perennial blueberry that today's highbush blueberry was cultivated in the early 1900s. Chosen for their plump, juicy fruits and superior flavour, texture, and sweetness, British Columbia's fertile acidic soils and temperate climate have proven to provide the ideal growing conditions for the fruit, and have turned the highbush blueberry into a BC success story for the past 80 years.

Farm Fresh

As one of the world's largest producers of fresh blueberries, British Columbia grows highbush berries almost exclusively. In fact, BC is the largest highbush blueberry-growing region in the world. Grown both organically and conventionally, BC's blueberry season typically runs from June to September, during which time fresh and juicy BC-grown blueberries can be found in the produce aisle across the province and the rest of Canada.

British Columbia accounts for 98 per cent of Canada's fresh blueberry market and produces 40 million kilograms (89 million pounds) of blueberries annually. Handled with extraordinary care to preserve the utmost quality and retain maximum freshness and flavour of the fruit, BC blueberries are either hand-picked or mechanically harvested then shipped within 24 hours to be packaged for fresh sales, or frozen or processed for year-round distribution to global markets.

Year Round Distribution

BC blueberries may be prepared in any number of ways, perfectly suited to fit the needs of the customer. After the fruit is graded and sorted, it may be frozen in bulk cases or individually flash frozen for year round distribution. It is also puréed, juiced, concentrated, dried, puffed, and powdered. The vast range of processing options demonstrates the global popularity of the fruit and increasing demand for the high quality British Columbian product, which is as sweet and tasty as it is nutritious.

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