

This resource was developed for the City of Hyattsville by the University of Maryland Department of Global, Environmental, and Occupational Health and the Environmental Finance Center.

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Anise Hyssop

Name: Anise Hyssop (also known as Blue Giant Hyssop)

Overview:

Anise Hyssop is a perennial herbaceous plant native to North America, belonging to the mint family (Lamiaceae). It is notable for its aromatic leaves and spikes of lavender-blue flowers that bloom from mid-summer to early fall. These flowers are attractive to pollinators such as bees, butterflies, and hummingbirds.

Appearance:

Anise hyssop features tall spikes of purple flowers that are visually striking. The plant has aromatic, green leaves that are often ovate or lance-shaped. The flowers are small and tubular, arranged in dense clusters on elongated spikes.

Taste and Flavor:

The leaves and flowers of anise hyssop have a sweet, licorice-like flavor. This distinctive taste makes it a popular addition to teas, salads, and desserts.

Nutritional Value:

Anise hyssop contains vitamin C, calcium, and iron. It also has notable anti-bacterial and anti-inflammatory properties, which can help fight off respiratory infections and bronchitis.

Growing Conditions:

Anise hyssop prefers full sun to partial shade and requires moderate watering. Once established, it can tolerate drought conditions. It thrives in well-drained, moderately fertile soil.

Cultivation:

To cultivate anise hyssop, plant it in a location that receives ample sunlight. It should be watered moderately, with the ability to withstand periods of drought. The soil should be well-drained and moderately fertile. Regular pruning can help maintain its shape and encourage healthy growth.

Availability:

Anise hyssop is typically available from mid-summer to early fall when it is in bloom. It is commonly grown in North America.

Culinary Uses:

The edible leaves and flowers of anise hyssop are used to flavor a variety of foods and beverages. They can be added to teas, salads, and desserts for a sweet, licorice-like taste.

Interesting Facts:

Anise hyssop is not only valued for its culinary uses but also for its ability to attract beneficial

pollinators like bees and butterflies. Its medicinal properties, including its anti-bacterial and anti-inflammatory effects, add to its appeal.

Storage and Shelf Life:

Dried anise hyssop can be stored in an airtight jar for up to a year. When kept in a dark, airtight container, a few ounces of dried hyssop can retain its quality for several months.

Allergies and Precautions:

There are no widely recognized allergies or sensitivities specifically associated with anise hyssop. However, individuals with allergies to other members of the mint family might exercise caution.

Fun Trivia:

Anise hyssop has been used traditionally by Indigenous peoples of North America for its medicinal properties, including as a remedy for respiratory ailments. Its sweet, licorice-like flavor has also made it a favorite among herbalists and chefs.

Apple

Name: Apple

Overview:

Apples are among the most widely cultivated and consumed fruits globally. They belong to the Rosaceae family, which includes pears, peaches, and plums. Known for their sweet or tart flavor, crisp texture, and versatile use in cooking, apples come in various sizes, colors, and shapes. They can be red, green, yellow, or a combination of these colors.

Appearance:

Apples vary widely in size and shape depending on the variety. They can be round or slightly elongated and exhibit a range of colors including red, green, yellow, or multicolored. Their skin is typically smooth and can have varying degrees of glossiness.

Taste and Flavor:

Apples can have a wide range of flavors from very sweet to tart, depending on the variety. Some common taste profiles include honeyed sweetness, tangy sharpness, or a balanced combination. The texture is typically crisp and juicy.

Nutritional Value:

Apples are rich in dietary fiber, which promotes healthy digestion and helps regulate blood sugar levels. They also contain vitamins (such as Vitamin C) and various antioxidants, contributing to overall health.

Growing Conditions:

Apple trees require full sun, ideally receiving at least six to eight hours of sunlight during the growing season. They thrive in moist, well-drained soil. Proper sunlight and soil conditions are crucial for optimal fruit production and tree health.

Cultivation:

Apple trees are typically planted in the spring or fall. They need ample sunlight and well-drained soil to grow effectively. Regular watering is important, especially during dry periods. Apple trees are usually pruned to maintain shape and improve fruit quality. Harvesting occurs from late summer through fall, depending on the variety and local climate.

Availability:

Apples are available from late summer through fall. They are commonly grown in temperate regions around the world, including the United States, Europe, and parts of Asia.

Culinary Uses:

Apples are highly versatile in the kitchen. They can be used in baking (such as pies and tarts), cooking (in savory dishes), and for making cider. They are also commonly eaten fresh as a snack or added to salads.

Interesting Facts:

Apples have been cultivated for thousands of years and hold significant cultural and historical importance. They are often associated with symbolism in various myths and legends, including the biblical story of Adam and Eve.

Storage and Shelf Life:

At room temperature, apples typically last about 1-2 weeks. To extend their freshness, store apples in the crisper drawer of the refrigerator, where they can last up to 4 weeks.

Allergies and Precautions:

Some individuals may have allergies to apples, often related to oral allergy syndrome (OAS) where the body reacts to certain proteins in apples that are similar to pollen proteins.

Fun Trivia:

There are over 7,500 varieties of apples grown around the world, each with its own unique flavor and texture. The most popular apple varieties include Fuji, Gala, Granny Smith, and Red Delicious.

Beach Plum

Name: Beach Plum

Overview:

Beach plums are a hardy fruit-bearing shrub native to the coastal regions of the northeastern United States. Known for their resilience and adaptability, these shrubs produce small, tart fruits that vary in color from red to purple, blue, or nearly black when ripe. Beach plums are valued both for their unique flavor and their role in coastal restoration projects.

Appearance:

Beach plum shrubs typically grow between 3 to 6 feet tall but can reach up to 10 feet under favorable conditions. They have a dense, bushy growth habit with multiple stems. The fruit is

small, approximately the size of a cherry, and changes color from green to red, purple, blue, or nearly black as it ripens.

Taste and Flavor:

The flavor of beach plums is tart and somewhat astringent, often compared to that of wild plums. This distinctive taste makes them suitable for various culinary uses.

Nutritional Value:

Beach plums are a good source of vitamins A and C, antioxidants, and dietary fiber. These nutrients contribute to their health benefits, including supporting immune function and digestive health.

Growing Conditions:

Beach plums thrive in sandy, well-drained soils and are commonly found in coastal dunes, sandy beaches, and scrublands. They are drought-tolerant once established and require minimal watering. They are well-suited to coastal environments and can help stabilize sand dunes and prevent erosion.

Cultivation:

Beach plums are typically planted in sandy, well-drained soils and are ideal for coastal areas. They need minimal watering once established and are often used in coastal restoration projects. The shrubs should be spaced adequately to allow for their bushy growth habit.

Availability:

Beach plums are typically harvested from late August to early October. They are commonly found in the northeastern coastal regions of the United States.

Culinary Uses:

Due to their tart flavor, beach plums are used to make jams, jellies, preserves, and sauces. They can also be incorporated into baking and beverages.

Interesting Facts:

Beach plums play a role in coastal restoration projects by stabilizing sand dunes and preventing erosion, showcasing their ecological importance beyond their culinary uses.

Storage and Shelf Life:

Beach plums should be stored in the refrigerator, where they will last for 3-5 days. They should be used promptly to enjoy their best flavor and quality.

Allergies and Precautions:

There are no widely recognized allergies or sensitivities specific to beach plums. However, individuals with fruit allergies should exercise caution.

Fun Trivia:

Beach plums are considered a local delicacy in some coastal communities, and their use in traditional recipes and local preserves reflects their cultural significance in the northeastern U.S.

Thornless Blackberry

Name: Thornless Blackberry

Overview:

Thornless blackberries are a cultivated variant of the traditional blackberry, known for their convenience and ease of handling due to the absence of sharp thorns. They grow on trailing or erect canes and produce clusters of dark, juicy, and sweet berries. These blackberries ripen in mid to late summer.

Appearance:

Thornless blackberry plants can grow on trailing or erect canes, which are free of the sharp thorns found on wild blackberry bushes. The berries are dark, juicy, and sweet, and they appear in clusters.

Taste and Flavor:

The flavor of thornless blackberries ranges from sweet and tangy to sour or bitter, depending on their ripeness. They are known for their juicy, rich taste, making them versatile for various culinary uses.

Nutritional Value:

Thornless blackberries are rich in vitamins, antioxidants, and dietary fiber. They provide important nutrients such as Vitamin C, Vitamin K, and manganese, and are beneficial for overall health.

Growing Conditions:

Thornless blackberries thrive in well-drained, fertile soils with a pH range of 5.5 to 7.0 (neutral to slightly acidic). They require regular watering, especially during dry periods, to maintain consistent moisture and support healthy growth.

Cultivation:

Thornless blackberry plants should be pruned in late winter or early spring. This involves removing dead or diseased canes and thinning out crowded growth to improve air circulation and sunlight penetration. This practice helps ensure healthy growth and fruit production.

Availability:

Thornless blackberries are typically available from mid to late summer when they are in season.

Culinary Uses:

Thornless blackberries are highly versatile. They can be eaten fresh, used in baking, made into jams and jellies, or frozen for later use. Their rich flavor makes them a popular choice for a variety of recipes.

Interesting Facts:

The development of thornless blackberry varieties was achieved through selective breeding.

This innovation was aimed at making blackberry cultivation safer and more convenient for both gardeners and commercial growers.

Storage and Shelf Life:

Thornless blackberries should be stored in the refrigerator, ideally in a crisper drawer with good air circulation. They will last for 3-5 days under these conditions. If not stored properly, they can rot more quickly.

Allergies and Precautions:

There are no widely recognized allergies specific to thornless blackberries. However, individuals with berry allergies should exercise caution.

Fun Trivia:

The absence of thorns in thornless blackberries not only makes them easier to handle but also represents a significant advancement in berry cultivation, reflecting the ongoing efforts to improve gardening practices and fruit quality.

Black Chokeberry

Name: Black Chokeberry (also known as Aronia Berry)

Overview:

Black chokeberries, or aronia berries, are deciduous shrubs native to North America. They are recognized for their hardy nature, attractive foliage, and nutrient-rich berries. These shrubs grow as multi-stemmed plants, reaching heights of 3 to 6 feet, and are noted for their vibrant fall colors.

Appearance:

Black chokeberry shrubs have glossy green leaves that turn vibrant red and orange in the fall. The berries are small, black, and glossy, maturing from late August through October. The shrubs present a dense and bushy appearance.

Taste and Flavor:

The berries have a distinctive astringent taste that can be quite tart when eaten raw. This tartness makes them less pleasant to eat fresh but well-suited for processed products.

Nutritional Value:

Black chokeberries are rich in vitamins C and K, dietary fiber, and antioxidants, particularly anthocyanins, which contribute to their deep color and health benefits. These nutrients support overall health and well-being.

Growing Conditions:

Black chokeberries thrive in well-drained, acidic to neutral soils and are adaptable to various soil types, including sandy and clay soils. They require regular watering, especially during dry periods, but are relatively drought-tolerant once established.

Cultivation:

Black chokeberries should be planted in well-drained soil with a pH ranging from acidic to neutral. They need regular watering but can tolerate drought once established. Pruning may be done to maintain shape and promote healthy growth.

Availability:

Black chokeberries ripen from late August through October, with their peak availability during the fall.

Culinary Uses:

Due to their tartness, black chokeberries are often used in processed forms such as juices, jams, jellies, wines, and baked goods. They can also be dried for use in teas and as a supplement.

Interesting Facts:

Native American tribes historically used black chokeberries both as a medicinal remedy and as a food source, often drying them to use during winter months. Their rich antioxidant content and deep color have long been valued in traditional practices.

Storage and Shelf Life:

Black chokeberries can last about a week when refrigerated. For longer storage, they can be frozen or dried.

Allergies and Precautions:

There are no widely recognized allergies specific to black chokeberries. However, individuals with sensitivities to other berries should proceed with caution.

Fun Trivia:

The deep color of black chokeberries is due to high levels of anthocyanins, which are powerful antioxidants. These compounds are also responsible for the vibrant hues found in other fruits like blueberries and cherries.

Black Raspberry

Name: Black Raspberry (also known as Black Caps or Thimbleberries)

Overview:

Black raspberries are a species of berry native to North America, distinct from blackberries and red raspberries. They are recognized for their unique characteristics, including their arching canes covered with small thorns and their smaller, distinctively textured berries.

Appearance:

Black raspberry plants have arching canes that start green and turn purplish-red as they mature. The berries are black when ripe and have a distinctive hollow core. They are smaller compared to blackberries and have a unique texture.

Taste and Flavor:

The flavor of black raspberries is slightly sweeter and more intense than that of red raspberries, with a mix of tart and sweet notes. This makes them particularly desirable for a variety of culinary uses.

Nutritional Value:

Black raspberries are rich in vitamins C and K, fiber, and antioxidants. Their high antioxidant content contributes to their health benefits, including supporting immune function and overall health.

Growing Conditions:

Black raspberries prefer well-drained, fertile soils with a pH between 5.5 and 6.5 (slightly acidic). They do well in loamy soils and require regular watering, especially during dry periods, to maintain soil moisture. They thrive in full sun.

Cultivation:

Black raspberry plants should be grown in well-drained, slightly acidic soils. They need regular watering to keep the soil moist and benefit from full sun exposure. The canes are covered in small thorns and should be pruned to manage growth and improve fruit production.

Availability:

Black raspberries ripen in early summer, from June to July. Their peak availability is during this period.

Culinary Uses:

Black raspberries can be eaten fresh or used in various culinary applications, including jams, jellies, pies, sauces, and smoothies. They can also be dried or frozen for later use.

Interesting Facts:

Black raspberries are not only prized for their unique flavor but also for their high antioxidant content. They are often used in traditional recipes and have been valued for their health benefits for centuries.

Storage and Shelf Life:

Black raspberries last about 2-3 days in the refrigerator. They should be used promptly to avoid mold and spoilage.

Allergies and Precautions:

There are no widely recognized allergies specific to black raspberries, but individuals with berry sensitivities should be cautious.

Fun Trivia:

The hollow core of black raspberries, which differentiates them from other raspberries, is due to their unique fruit structure. This characteristic also affects their texture and culinary uses.

Blueberry

Name: Blueberry

Overview:

Blueberries are nutrient-rich berries known for their sweet flavor and numerous health benefits. Native to North America, they belong to the Ericaceae family, which also includes cranberries. They are prized for their versatility and health-promoting properties.

Appearance:

Blueberries are small, round berries, typically ranging from 0.2 to 0.6 inches in diameter. They have smooth skin that can vary in color from dark blue to deep purple. Berries are ready to harvest when they are fully blue and should come off the plant easily with a gentle tug.

Taste and Flavor:

Blueberries have a sweet flavor with subtle tart notes. Their taste is well-balanced, making them popular for both fresh consumption and in various culinary applications.

Nutritional Value:

Blueberries are rich in fiber, vitamin C, vitamin K, manganese, and potassium. These nutrients support various health functions, including bone health, fluid balance, and overall cellular health. They are also high in antioxidants, which help combat oxidative stress.

Growing Conditions:

Blueberries prefer acidic soils with a pH between 4.5 and 5.5. They thrive in well-drained, sandy, or loamy soils rich in organic matter. Consistent moisture is crucial, especially during the fruiting season, and they do not tolerate waterlogged conditions. Full sun is required for optimal fruit production, so minimizing shade is beneficial.

Cultivation:

Blueberries should be planted in acidic, well-drained soil and require consistent moisture. They need full sun for best results and should be monitored for waterlogged conditions. Regular maintenance includes ensuring the soil remains acidic and well-drained.

Availability:

Blueberries are generally harvested from late spring to late summer, depending on the variety and local climate.

Culinary Uses:

Blueberries can be eaten fresh or added to cereals, salads, and yogurt. They are also used in baking, jams, jellies, and smoothies. Additionally, they can be dried or frozen for later use.

Interesting Facts:

Blueberries are one of the few fruits native to North America that have gained widespread popularity worldwide. They are celebrated for their high antioxidant content and have been a staple in many traditional dishes and modern recipes.

Storage and Shelf Life:

When refrigerated properly, blueberries can last up to 10-14 days. It is important to store them in a breathable container to maintain their quality. Over time, they may lose some flavor but will still be usable.

Allergies and Precautions:

There are no widely recognized allergies specific to blueberries. However, individuals with general fruit allergies or sensitivities should be cautious.

Fun Trivia:

Blueberries are sometimes referred to as "superfoods" due to their high levels of antioxidants, which contribute to their health benefits and make them a popular choice for health-conscious consumers.

Bush Cherry

Name: Bush Cherry

Overview:

Bush cherries are low-growing shrubs, valued for their unique tart flavor and attractive appearance. They typically reach heights of 4 to 10 feet, depending on the variety. The plants produce ornamental white or pink blossoms in the spring and are used in various culinary and landscaping applications.

Appearance:

Bush cherry shrubs are low-growing and can reach heights between 4 to 10 feet. They produce small cherries that are generally more tart than sweet cherries. The plants also display attractive white or pink blossoms in the spring.

Taste and Flavor:

Bush cherries are tart and smaller compared to sweet cherries. This tartness makes them ideal for cooking and baking, as well as for use in preserves, syrups, pies, and wines.

Nutritional Value:

Bush cherries contain beneficial plant compounds that support circulation and overall health. They are high in protein, carbohydrates, and fiber. They also contain antioxidants like anthocyanins, which may help prevent cancer and promote heart health, and melatonin, which can reduce inflammation and aid in managing arthritis pain.

Growing Conditions:

Bush cherries thrive in full sun but can tolerate partial shade. They need regular watering, especially during dry periods, though they are relatively drought-tolerant once established. Proper pruning can help maintain the shrub's shape and encourage healthy fruit production.

Cultivation:

Bush cherries should be planted in a location with full sun to partial shade. Regular watering is

important, but the plants are resilient and can handle some drought. Pruning is recommended to maintain the shape of the shrub and to promote better fruit production.

Availability:

Bush cherries are typically harvested in late summer to early fall, depending on the climate and variety.

Culinary Uses:

Bush cherries can be eaten fresh but are often used in cooking and baking due to their tart flavor. They are popular for making preserves, syrups, pies, and wines. Their attractive flowers also make them a choice for landscaping.

Interesting Facts:

In addition to their culinary uses, bush cherries are valued for their ornamental qualities, with their spring blossoms adding aesthetic value to gardens. They are also known for their health benefits due to their high antioxidant content.

Storage and Shelf Life:

Bush cherries last about 8-9 days in the refrigerator when stored properly.

Allergies and Precautions:

There are no widely recognized allergies specific to bush cherries. However, individuals with sensitivities to other fruits or tree nuts should exercise caution.

Fun Trivia:

The combination of tartness and health benefits makes bush cherries a versatile fruit, not only enhancing recipes but also contributing to garden aesthetics.

Clove Currant

Name: Clove Currant (*Ribes odoratum*)

Overview:

The clove currant is a deciduous shrub native to North America, particularly in the central and western United States. It is notable for its fragrant flowers and edible berries. The shrub is valued both for its ornamental qualities and its culinary uses.

Appearance:

Clove currant shrubs produce yellow, tubular flowers in the spring that emit a clove-like scent, giving the plant its common name. The berries are dark purple to black when ripe, typically in mid-summer, and have a sweet-tart flavor. The shrub itself is bushy and can add aesthetic value to gardens.

Taste and Flavor:

The berries of clove currant have a sweet-tart flavor. This unique flavor profile makes them suitable for fresh consumption and various culinary applications.

Nutritional Value:

Clove currants are high in vitamin C, which supports the immune system, skin health, and provides antioxidant protection. Their nutritional profile contributes to their health benefits and makes them a valuable addition to the diet.

Growing Conditions:

Clove currants thrive in well-drained soil and need adequate space for their spread. They can be planted in either spring or fall. Regular watering is essential during the first year to establish the plant, after which it becomes quite drought-tolerant. Full sun is ideal, but they can also tolerate shade.

Cultivation:

Clove currants can be propagated through cuttings or by dividing suckers from the base of the plant. Regular monitoring is required to manage pests such as aphids and diseases like powdery mildew. Appropriate treatments can help keep these issues under control.

Availability:

Clove currants produce berries that are typically ripe in mid-summer.

Culinary Uses:

The berries can be eaten fresh or used in a variety of culinary applications such as jams, jellies, and pies. Their sweet-tart flavor enhances many recipes.

Interesting Facts:

In addition to their culinary uses, clove currants are valued for their fragrant flowers and attractive foliage. This makes them popular in landscaping and as ornamental shrubs.

Storage and Shelf Life:

Clove currant berries can last up to 7 days in the refrigerator when stored properly.

Allergies and Precautions:

There are no widely recognized allergies specific to clove currants. However, individuals with sensitivities to other fruits or plant-based allergens should be cautious.

Fun Trivia:

The clove-like scent of the flowers is a unique feature that distinguishes clove currants from other currant varieties. This aromatic quality contributes to their appeal as ornamental shrubs.

Cherry Red Currant

Name: Cherry Red Currant (*Ribes rubrum*)

Overview:

Cherry red currants are a type of red currant known for their bright red, tart berries. Part of the gooseberry family (*Grossulariaceae*), this deciduous shrub is native to parts of Europe but has

been widely cultivated in North America and other regions. It is valued for its hardy nature and the tart flavor of its berries.

Appearance:

The shrub produces small, inconspicuous greenish-yellow flowers in clusters known as racemes in the spring. The berries are bright red, translucent, and about the size of a pea, growing in clusters. They have a tart flavor and are visually striking against the green foliage.

Taste and Flavor:

Cherry red currants have a tart flavor, which makes them ideal for culinary uses where a tangy note is desired. Their tartness is more pronounced than their sweetness.

Nutritional Value:

Cherry red currants are rich in vitamin C and are a good source of fiber. These nutrients contribute to immune health, skin health, and overall digestive function.

Growing Conditions:

Cherry red currants prefer well-drained, fertile soil but can tolerate a range of soil types, including sandy and clay soils. Regular watering is essential to keep the soil consistently moist, particularly during dry periods. They thrive in full sun but can also tolerate partial shade. These shrubs are hardy and can withstand cold temperatures, making them suitable for various climates.

Cultivation:

Cherry red currants should be planted in well-drained, fertile soil and require regular watering to maintain soil moisture. They can handle full sun as well as partial shade. Pruning can help maintain the shape of the shrub and encourage better fruit production.

Availability:

Cherry red currants are typically harvested in mid-summer, depending on the climate and growing conditions.

Culinary Uses:

The berries can be eaten fresh but are more commonly used in cooking and baking due to their tartness. They are popular in making jams, jellies, syrups, sauces, and desserts. Additionally, they can be used to add a tangy flavor to salads and savory dishes.

Interesting Facts:

Cherry red currants are known for their vibrant color and tart flavor, which makes them a popular choice for both culinary and ornamental uses. Their hardy nature allows them to grow in a variety of climates.

Storage and Shelf Life:

Cherry red currants can last up to a week in the refrigerator when stored properly.

Allergies and Precautions:

There are no widely recognized allergies specific to cherry red currants. However, individuals with sensitivities to other fruits or plant-based allergens should exercise caution.

Fun Trivia:

The bright red color of cherry red currants not only makes them a visually appealing fruit but also signifies their high antioxidant content, which contributes to their health benefits.

Elderberry

Name: Elderberry (*Sambucus nigra*)

Overview:

Elderberries are small, dark berries from the elder tree, widely known for their use in traditional medicine, culinary applications, and as ornamental plants. The most commonly known species is the European elderberry (*Sambucus nigra*). Native to Europe, North America, and parts of Asia, elderberries have been used for centuries for their health benefits and versatility.

Appearance:

Elderberry plants produce clusters of small, white or cream-colored flowers, known as elderflowers, that appear in late spring to early summer. The berries are small, dark purple to black, and grow in clusters. They ripen in late summer to early fall.

Taste and Flavor:

Elderberries are quite tart and are often sweetened when used in recipes. Their flavor can be strong and distinctive, making them a unique ingredient in various culinary applications.

Nutritional Value:

Elderberries are high in vitamin C, which supports immune health and overall wellness. They also contain antioxidants and other nutrients that contribute to their health benefits.

Growing Conditions:

Elderberries thrive in full sun to partial shade. They are hardy plants that can withstand cold temperatures, making them suitable for a range of climates. They prefer well-drained soil and are relatively low-maintenance.

Cultivation:

Elderberries can be grown in various climates and are relatively easy to cultivate. Regular watering helps maintain healthy plants, and they should be planted in well-drained soil. The berries should be harvested when they are fully ripe.

Availability:

Elderberries are typically harvested in late summer to early fall.

Culinary Uses:

Elderberries are used to make jams, jellies, syrups, wines, and pies. They can be quite tart and

are often sweetened in recipes. Elderflowers are used to make cordials, teas, flavoring agents for beverages and desserts, elderflower champagne, and fritters.

Interesting Facts:

Elderberries have been used in traditional medicine for centuries. They are also known for their ornamental value, with elderflowers adding beauty to gardens. However, raw elderberries and other parts of the plant, such as leaves, stems, and roots, contain cyanogenic glycosides, which can be toxic if consumed in large quantities. Cooking or processing the berries effectively removes these toxins.

Storage and Shelf Life:

Fresh elderberries can last up to a week in the refrigerator if stored in an airtight container. Dried elderberries, when stored in a dark, cool place, can last up to a year.

Allergies and Precautions:

Raw elderberries and other parts of the elder plant contain cyanogenic glycosides and can be toxic if consumed in large amounts. Cooking or processing the berries eliminates these toxins, making them safe to eat. It's important to handle elderberries properly to avoid potential health risks.

Fun Trivia:

Elderflower champagne is a traditional beverage made from elderflowers, and it has been enjoyed in many European cultures for centuries. The unique flavor and aroma of elderflowers make them a special ingredient in both culinary and beverage applications.

Fig

Name: Fig (*Ficus carica*)

Overview:

Figs are a unique fruit with a rich history of cultivation and use by humans. Belonging to the Moraceae family, which includes other fruits like mulberries, figs are technically syconia—a type of multiple fruit where the flowers and seeds grow together inside a fleshy stem. The common fig is the most widely grown species. Figs are known for their sweet, soft flesh and crunchy seeds.

Appearance:

Figs are pear-shaped and can vary in color from green to yellow, purple, and black when ripe. They typically ripen from July to September. The interior of a fig is filled with tiny, crunchy seeds and a sweet, soft flesh.

Taste and Flavor:

Figs have a sweet, juicy taste when fresh. Dried figs offer a concentrated sweetness and are used in various dishes. Their flavor profile makes them a versatile ingredient in both sweet and savory recipes.

Nutritional Value:

Figs are a good source of dietary fiber, which aids digestion and helps prevent constipation. They also contain vitamins and minerals, including calcium, potassium, and iron.

Growing Conditions:

Figs thrive in warm, temperate climates and are native to the Mediterranean and western Asia. They can also grow in subtropical regions. Figs require full sun for optimal growth and fruit production and prefer well-drained, loamy soil but are adaptable to various soil types, including sandy and clay soils.

Cultivation:

Figs are relatively easy to grow and are adaptable to a range of soil types. They should be planted in a location with full sun and well-drained soil. Regular watering is important, especially during dry periods, but overwatering should be avoided. Pruning may be necessary to maintain the shape and health of the tree.

Availability:

Figs are typically harvested from July to September, depending on the climate and variety.

Culinary Uses:

Figs can be eaten fresh and are popular in baking (cakes, cookies, breads), cooking (sauces, salads, meats), and making preserves (jams, jellies). They are also used to flavor beverages like teas and wines. Dried figs are a popular snack and ingredient in various dishes.

Interesting Facts:

Figs are not true fruits but syconia, which is a type of multiple fruit. This unique structure contributes to their distinct texture and flavor.

Storage and Shelf Life:

Fresh figs should be kept in the crisper drawer of the refrigerator and can last up to a week. Dried figs have a longer shelf life and can be stored in a cool, dry place for several months.

Allergies and Precautions:

Figs are generally well-tolerated, but individuals with allergies to latex or other fruits may experience reactions. It's advisable to consult with a healthcare provider if there are concerns about potential allergies.

Fun Trivia:

Figs have been cultivated since ancient times and were highly prized by ancient civilizations, including the Greeks and Romans. They were also among the first fruits to be domesticated.

Hazelnut

Name: Hazelnut (*Corylus avellana*)

Alternate Names: Filberts, Cobnuts

Overview:

Hazelnuts are the edible nuts of the hazel tree, valued for their rich flavor and nutritional benefits for thousands of years. They are commonly used in various culinary applications and are key ingredients in products like Nutella. Hazelnut trees or shrubs typically grow to about 10 to 20 feet in height and width, with a multi-stemmed growth habit.

Appearance:

Hazelnut trees have round to oval green leaves with serrated edges that turn yellow in the fall. The nuts are encased in a hard shell surrounded by a husk. When ripe (from late August to October), the husks turn brown, and the nuts fall to the ground.

Taste and Flavor:

Hazelnuts can be eaten raw or roasted. Roasting enhances their flavor and makes them crunchier. They have a rich, nutty flavor that is widely appreciated in both sweet and savory dishes.

Nutritional Value:

Hazelnuts are rich in monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats, which are beneficial for heart health. They also provide essential vitamins and minerals, including vitamin E, magnesium, and copper. Hazelnuts are a good source of dietary fiber and antioxidants.

Growing Conditions:

Hazelnuts thrive in temperate climates and require a period of winter chilling to produce a good crop. They prefer full sun to partial shade and well-drained soil. Regular watering is necessary, especially during dry periods, to ensure healthy growth and nut production.

Cultivation:

Hazelnut trees or shrubs are relatively easy to grow in suitable climates. They should be planted in well-drained soil with ample sunlight. Regular pruning can help maintain the shape of the tree and promote better nut production. Hazelnuts typically ripen from late August to October.

Availability:

Hazelnuts are generally harvested from late summer to fall, depending on the climate and region.

Culinary Uses:

Hazelnuts can be eaten raw or roasted and are often used in baking, cooking, and confectionery. They are a key ingredient in chocolate products, such as Nutella, and are used in making truffles, pralines, and other candies. Hazelnut butter and hazelnut paste are also popular.

Interesting Facts:

Hazelnuts have been cultivated since ancient times and were highly valued by various civilizations. The name "filbert" is believed to come from the Old English word "fylberd," which refers to St. Philbert's Day, around the time hazelnuts ripen.

Storage and Shelf Life:

Hazelnuts should be stored in a cool, dry place. Fresh, unshelled hazelnuts can last several months, while shelled hazelnuts should be used within a few weeks to maintain their freshness. Roasted hazelnuts can be stored for up to 6 months in an airtight container.

Allergies and Precautions:

Hazelnuts are tree nuts and can cause allergic reactions in individuals with nut allergies. It is important for those with nut allergies to avoid consuming hazelnuts and products containing them.

Fun Trivia:

Hazelnuts have been used in traditional medicine for centuries and are believed to have various health benefits. They are also an important crop in several regions, including Turkey, which is the world's largest producer of hazelnuts.

Holly (Yaupon)

Name: Yaupon Holly (*Ilex vomitoria*)

Alternate Names: Yaupon

Overview:

Yaupon holly is an evergreen shrub native to the southeastern United States. It is valued for its glossy leaves, red berries, and its historical and cultural significance. It typically grows to about 10-20 feet in height and can spread 8-12 feet wide. The shrub is known for its adaptability and resilience.

Appearance:

Yaupon holly features glossy, dark green leaves and bright red berries. It has a dense, rounded growth habit that can be pruned into various shapes. The plant is evergreen, maintaining its foliage year-round.

Taste and Flavor:

The leaves of yaupon holly contain caffeine and were traditionally used to make a caffeinated tea known as "black drink." The flavor of yaupon tea is similar to traditional teas but is unique due to its historical preparation methods.

Nutritional Value:

Yaupon holly leaves contain caffeine, making them a natural stimulant similar to tea or coffee. They do not provide significant nutritional value in terms of vitamins or minerals but are noted for their unique caffeine content.

Growing Conditions:

Yaupon holly thrives in a range of soil types, including sandy, loamy, and clay soils. It prefers well-drained soil but can tolerate occasional flooding. The shrub does well in full sun to partial shade and is adaptable to various light conditions.

Cultivation:

Yaupon holly is relatively easy to cultivate and can be pruned into various shapes. It requires minimal care once established but can become invasive in some areas due to its spreading nature. Regular maintenance and control measures can help manage its growth and prevent it from becoming invasive.

Availability:

Yaupon holly is available throughout its native range in the southeastern United States and can be found in nurseries that specialize in native plants.

Culinary Uses:

The leaves are used to make yaupon tea, which is a native alternative to traditional teas and coffee. Historically, it was used by Native American tribes for ceremonial purposes. Today, it is marketed as a sustainable beverage option.

Interesting Facts:

The berries of yaupon holly are toxic to humans and can cause nausea and vomiting if ingested. However, they are a food source for birds and small mammals. Yaupon tea, also known as "black drink," played a significant role in the rituals of various Native American tribes, including the Cherokee and Creek. The plant can become invasive in some areas, so it's important to manage its spread carefully.

Storage and Shelf Life:

Fresh yaupon holly leaves should be used promptly to make tea, as they can lose their potency over time. Dried leaves should be stored in an airtight container in a cool, dry place to maintain their quality.

Allergies and Precautions:

The berries are toxic to humans and should be avoided. Caution should be exercised, especially around children and pets. The leaves contain caffeine, so individuals sensitive to caffeine should be mindful of their consumption.

Fun Trivia:

Yaupon holly is one of the few native North American plants that contain caffeine, making it a unique alternative to traditional tea and coffee. Its historical use as a ceremonial beverage highlights its cultural significance among Native American tribes.

Jostaberry

Name: Jostaberry (*Ribes × nidigrolaria*)

Overview:

Jostaberries are a hybrid fruit developed by crossing black currants and gooseberries. Created

in Germany in the 1970s, they aim to combine the best traits of both parent fruits while addressing some of their less desirable aspects. These thornless shrubs grow to 5-6 feet in height and width, and they are known for their productive and resilient nature.

Appearance:

Jostaberries are dark purple to black when fully ripe and are slightly larger than black currants. The plants produce small, greenish-yellow flowers in the spring. The berries ripen in mid-summer, typically in July or August.

Taste and Flavor:

Jostaberries have a flavor profile that combines the tartness of black currants with the sweetness of gooseberries. They are less acidic than black currants, making them suitable for fresh eating. Their balanced taste also makes them versatile for various culinary uses.

Nutritional Value:

Jostaberries are rich in vitamin C and antioxidants. They offer health benefits such as boosting the immune system and fighting oxidative stress. Their nutritional profile makes them a healthy addition to the diet.

Growing Conditions:

Jostaberries thrive in full sun to partial shade and are hardy, adapting well to various climates, including cooler regions. They require regular pruning to maintain their shape and promote healthy growth. Ideal conditions include well-drained soil and regular watering, especially during dry periods.

Cultivation:

Jostaberry shrubs should be pruned regularly to remove old, weak, or overcrowded stems, which helps maintain plant health and shape. They are resistant to many diseases and pests that typically affect currants and gooseberries. They are also less prone to the common issues seen with their parent plants.

Availability:

Jostaberries are available in regions where they are cultivated, primarily in cooler climates. They are harvested in mid-summer, usually from July to August.

Culinary Uses:

Jostaberries can be eaten fresh or used in a variety of recipes. They are excellent for making jams, jellies, pies, and sauces. Their flavor makes them a suitable substitute in recipes that call for black currants or gooseberries. They can be stored in the refrigerator for 5-7 days.

Interesting Facts:

Jostaberries were developed with the goal of combining desirable traits from black currants and gooseberries while minimizing their less favorable aspects. The thornless nature of the shrub makes harvesting and handling easier compared to traditional currants and gooseberries.

Storage and Shelf Life:

Jostaberries can be stored in the refrigerator for 5-7 days. To extend their shelf life, they can be frozen or processed into preserves.

Allergies and Precautions:

There are no specific allergies associated with jostaberries; however, individuals with sensitivities to currants or gooseberries should exercise caution.

Fun Trivia:

Jostaberries were developed through a breeding program in Germany, reflecting the country's long tradition of horticultural innovation and fruit cultivation.

Kiwi (Anna Hardy)

Name: Anna Hardy Kiwi (*Actinidia arguta* 'Anna')

Alternate Names: Anna Kiwi

Overview:

Anna Hardy kiwis, also known as 'Anna,' are a cold-hardy variety of kiwifruit developed to thrive in regions with colder climates where traditional fuzzy kiwifruit cannot survive. They are small, smooth-skinned kiwis with a flavor profile similar to traditional kiwifruit but often considered sweeter and more aromatic.

Appearance:

The fruits are about the size of a large grape and have smooth, edible skin that is green or slightly reddish. They lack the fuzzy exterior typical of larger kiwifruits. The flesh inside is green, juicy, and contains small, edible black seeds.

Taste and Flavor:

Anna Hardy kiwis have a sweet, aromatic flavor similar to traditional kiwifruit but are often perceived as sweeter. The juicy flesh and small seeds contribute to their pleasant eating experience.

Nutritional Value:

Anna Hardy kiwis are rich in vitamin C, vitamin K, and fiber. They also provide various essential nutrients and antioxidants that support overall health and wellness.

Growing Conditions:

Anna Hardy kiwis grow on vigorous, deciduous vines that can reach 20-30 feet in length. They require strong support structures like trellises or arbors to climb. They prefer full sun for optimal fruit production but can tolerate partial shade. Consistent watering is necessary, especially during dry periods, but the soil should not be waterlogged. Regular pruning in late winter or early spring is essential to manage growth and ensure good air circulation and sunlight penetration.

Pollination:

Anna Hardy kiwis are dioecious, meaning separate male and female plants are required for fruit production. One male plant can pollinate up to six female plants.

Harvesting:

The kiwis ripen in late summer, primarily in August. They should be harvested when they are fully ripe. The fruits last 5-10 days when stored in the refrigerator.

Culinary Uses:

Anna Hardy kiwis can be eaten fresh with the skin on, making them a convenient and nutritious snack. They are also suitable for use in salads, desserts, jams, and smoothies.

Storage and Shelf Life:

Anna Hardy kiwis can be stored in the refrigerator for 5-10 days. To extend their freshness, they should be kept in a cool, dry place and handled gently to avoid bruising.

Interesting Facts:

Anna Hardy kiwis are known for their ability to thrive in colder climates, making them a suitable alternative to traditional kiwifruit in regions with harsh winters. The smooth skin of Anna Hardy kiwis eliminates the need to peel them, offering added convenience for consumers.

Allergies and Precautions:

There are no specific allergies associated with Anna Hardy kiwis; however, individuals with sensitivities to kiwifruit should exercise caution.

Fun Trivia:

Anna Hardy kiwis are part of the hardy kiwifruit varieties developed to extend the cultivation of kiwifruit into regions with colder climates, showcasing innovative horticultural advancements.

Kiwi (Fuzzy)

Name: Common name – Kiwi (Fuzzy); Scientific name – *Actinidia deliciosa*; Also known as Chinese gooseberry.

Overview: Fuzzy kiwis are the most common variety of kiwifruit, known for their fuzzy brown skin and bright green, nutrient-rich flesh. These fruits grow on large, deciduous vines that require sturdy support systems like trellises or pergolas.

Appearance: Oval-shaped, 2-3 inches long, with brown fuzzy skin and vibrant green flesh containing tiny black seeds. The exterior is coarse, while the flesh is soft and juicy.

Taste and Flavor: Fuzzy kiwis are sweet and tangy, with a flavor similar to a blend of strawberry, banana, and melon. The seeds add a mild crunch to the smooth flesh.

Nutritional Value: Rich in vitamin C, K, E, and potassium, with high fiber content and antioxidants. Consuming kiwis supports digestion, boosts the immune system, and promotes overall health.

Growing Conditions: Best grown in temperate climates, with well-drained, slightly acidic soil and full sunlight. Regular watering is important, especially in dry periods, but avoid waterlogging the roots.

Cultivation: Kiwis are dioecious, requiring both male and female plants for pollination. They are grown from seeds or cuttings, and require pruning in winter to promote healthy growth and fruit production. Harvest season is in October or November.

Availability: Typically available in October and November, and commonly grown in temperate regions like New Zealand, Italy, and the U.S. (California).

Culinary Uses: Eaten fresh, sliced, or scooped. Used in fruit salads, smoothies, desserts, jams, jellies, and sauces.

Interesting Facts: Originally known as Chinese gooseberry, kiwifruit was rebranded after New Zealand's national bird, the kiwi.

Storage and Shelf Life: Lasts 5-10 days in the fridge. Store in a cool place to prevent overripening but avoid freezing.

Allergies and Precautions: People allergic to latex may experience reactions like itching, swelling, or digestive discomfort when consuming kiwis.

Fun Trivia: Kiwifruit seeds are edible and packed with nutrients, though they contribute little to the overall flavor.

Kiwi (Issai)

Name: Issai Kiwi; a variety of hardy kiwifruit.

Overview: Issai kiwis are known for their compact size and self-fertile nature, which sets them apart from most other kiwifruit varieties. Unlike others, they do not require a separate male plant for pollination, making them ideal for small gardens or limited spaces. The fruits are small, about the size of large grapes, and have smooth, thin, edible green skin without the fuzzy exterior typical of other kiwifruits.

Appearance: Issai kiwis are small, grape-sized fruits with smooth, green, edible skin. Unlike traditional fuzzy kiwifruits, their exterior is smooth, and the flesh inside is green with small edible seeds.

Taste and Flavor: Issai kiwis have a sweet and tangy flavor, similar to larger kiwifruits but considered more aromatic and complex. Their juicy flesh is refreshing, and the skin can be eaten, making them a convenient snack.

Nutritional Value: Issai kiwis are high in vitamin C, vitamin K, and fiber. They provide a healthy dose of antioxidants and contribute to digestive health and immune system support.

Growing Conditions: These kiwis thrive in temperate climates and require well-drained soil. Full sun exposure is essential for optimal growth and fruit production. Regular watering is necessary, especially during dry periods, but care should be taken to avoid waterlogging.

Cultivation: Issai kiwis grow on deciduous vines, typically more compact than other hardy kiwifruit varieties, reaching 12-20 feet in length. They require support structures like trellises or arbors to climb. The fruits ripen in late summer to early fall, generally in September and October.

Availability: Issai kiwis are available from late summer to early fall, primarily in regions with temperate climates.

Culinary Uses: Issai kiwis can be eaten fresh, with the skin on, making them a convenient snack. They are also used in salads, desserts, jams, and smoothies.

Interesting Facts: Issai kiwis do not require a male plant for pollination, making them self-fertile and highly efficient for small-scale gardeners.

Storage and Shelf Life: After harvest, Issai kiwis can be stored in a cool, dry place and will continue to ripen off the vine. To extend their shelf life, they can be kept in the refrigerator, where they last around 5-10 days.

Allergies and Precautions: As with other kiwi varieties, some individuals may experience allergic reactions, particularly those allergic to latex.

Fun Trivia: Issai kiwis are a favorite among small-space gardeners because of their self-fertile nature, making them an easy-to-grow fruit in home gardens.

Mulberry (Weeping)

Name: Weeping Mulberry; scientific name *Morus alba 'Pendula'*.

Overview: Weeping mulberries are known for their cascading, umbrella-like branches, making them a popular ornamental tree. These trees are admired for their graceful appearance, especially their long branches that often reach the ground.

Appearance: The tree has long, pendulous branches that arch downward, creating a weeping effect. The leaves are shiny and green, turning yellow in the fall. The berries produced by female trees resemble blackberries.

Taste and Flavor: Mulberries are sweet and flavorful, with a taste similar to other berries. They are rich in natural sweetness and can serve as a healthier alternative to sugary treats.

Nutritional Value: Mulberries are packed with vitamin C and iron. They are a nutritious snack, offering antioxidants and contributing to immune health.

Growing Conditions: Weeping mulberries thrive in full sun to partial shade, needing at least 4-6 hours of direct sunlight each day. They prefer well-drained soil and require consistent watering, especially during dry periods.

Cultivation: Regular pruning is necessary to maintain the tree's health and shape. Pruning should be done in late winter or early spring, removing any dead or diseased branches. Female trees produce berries, but many ornamental varieties are male and fruitless to reduce maintenance.

Availability: Mulberries typically ripen from late spring to mid-summer. Female trees produce fruit, but many ornamental weeping mulberries are male cultivars that do not bear berries.

Culinary Uses: Mulberries can be eaten fresh or used in place of other berries in recipes. They work well in desserts, jams, smoothies, and as a healthy snack.

Interesting Facts: Male weeping mulberries are often chosen for ornamental purposes to avoid the cleanup from fallen berries, which can be messy.

Storage and Shelf Life: Unwashed mulberries should be stored in a covered container in the refrigerator and have a shelf life of 2-3 days. To extend freshness, place them on a paper towel-lined plate and cover with plastic wrap.

Allergies and Precautions: Mulberries are generally safe to eat, but care should be taken with unripe berries, which can be mildly toxic if consumed in large quantities.

Fun Trivia: Weeping mulberries are often grown purely for their decorative value, and their striking form can serve as a natural focal point in gardens and landscapes.

Mulberry (Shangri-La)

Name: Shangri-La Mulberry; a variety of white mulberry (*Morus alba*).

Overview: Shangri-La mulberries are popular for their large, sweet fruits and hardy nature. This variety produces some of the largest mulberries, valued for both their flavor and suitability for home gardens.

Appearance: Shangri-La mulberries produce large, juicy black or dark purple berries, typically 1.5 to 2 inches long. The tree itself can grow up to 20-25 feet in height and has a spreading habit.

Taste and Flavor: The berries are sweet and juicy, ideal for fresh consumption or use in various recipes. Their large size and rich flavor make them a standout among mulberry varieties.

Nutritional Value: Rich in vitamin C, these berries provide an excellent source of antioxidants and nutrients. Their high vitamin content supports immune health and general well-being.

Growing Conditions: Shangri-La mulberries are cold-hardy, tolerating temperatures as low as 0°F (-18°C). They require full sun and well-drained soil, and are known for their vigorous growth, making them ideal for a range of climates.

Cultivation: The tree grows vigorously, reaching 20-25 feet with a similar spread. Its spreading nature makes it useful as a shade tree, though it can create a mess with fallen berries. Regular pruning is recommended, especially if the tree is planted near walkways or patios.

Availability: The fruits ripen from late spring to early summer, providing a steady supply of large, sweet berries during this time.

Culinary Uses: Shangri-La mulberries can be eaten fresh, dried, or used in pies, jams, and smoothies. Their large size and sweetness make them versatile for a variety of culinary applications.

Interesting Facts: While Shangri-La mulberries are cold-hardy and easy to grow, they are best planted away from high-traffic areas due to the mess created by fallen berries.

Storage and Shelf Life: Mulberries have a short shelf life and should ideally be consumed within 3 days of harvest. Storing them in a cool, dry place or refrigerating them helps extend freshness.

Allergies and Precautions: While generally safe to eat, mulberries can cause mild allergic reactions in some individuals, particularly if consumed unripe.

Fun Trivia: Shangri-La mulberries are one of the largest varieties, making them a favorite for those who enjoy homegrown, fresh fruit with an impressive size and flavor profile.

New Jersey Tea

Name: New Jersey Tea; scientific name *Ceanothus americanus*.

Overview: New Jersey Tea is a hardy, deciduous shrub native to North America. It is valued for its attractive, fragrant white flowers and its historical use as a tea substitute during the American Revolutionary War.

Appearance: The plant produces clusters of small, fragrant white flowers in late spring to early summer. These flowers resemble tiny cotton balls and are highly attractive to pollinators. The shrub can be slow to establish, especially in poor soil, but becomes resilient over time.

Taste and Flavor: The leaves of New Jersey Tea can be harvested and used to make a caffeine-free tea, which was historically used as an alternative to imported tea. The leaves should not be consumed raw.

Nutritional Value: While the plant's leaves are not consumed for nutritional purposes, they were historically brewed into a non-caffeinated tea, making it a popular alternative to traditional tea.

Growing Conditions: New Jersey Tea prefers full sun to partial shade, blooming more profusely in full sunlight. It is drought-tolerant once established but requires regular watering during its first growing season to develop a deep root system.

Cultivation: Though slow-growing, New Jersey Tea can thrive in various soil conditions. It requires well-drained soil and consistent care in its early stages but becomes a tough, resilient shrub over time. It tolerates drought well once established.

Availability: The plant blooms from late spring to early summer, and its leaves can be harvested during this time for tea-making.

Culinary Uses: The leaves are traditionally dried and brewed into a tea. This was especially popular during the American Revolution when imported tea was scarce. The leaves do not contain caffeine but provide a flavorful herbal tea alternative.

Interesting Facts: During the American Revolutionary War, the leaves of New Jersey Tea were used as a substitute for imported tea, giving the plant its name. Despite lacking caffeine, it became a favorite among American colonists.

Storage and Shelf Life: Once harvested and dried, the leaves can be stored in a cool, dry place for an extended period, similar to other dried herbs or teas.

Allergies and Precautions: The leaves should not be eaten raw, and no significant allergies are commonly associated with the plant.

Fun Trivia: New Jersey Tea was a symbol of patriotism during the Revolutionary War, as it provided a local tea alternative when British imports were unavailable.

Pawpaw

Name: Pawpaw (*Asimina triloba*), also known as the "poor man's banana" or "Indiana banana."

Overview: Pawpaw is a fascinating, native fruit tree from the eastern United States. Known for its tropical-looking leaves and custard-like fruit, pawpaw has gained attention among gardeners and foragers. It bears the largest edible fruit native to North America.

Appearance: The fruit is oblong, resembling a small mango or papaya, typically 3-6 inches long. Its skin is greenish-yellow, often developing brown spots as it ripens. The tree features

large, lush leaves that give it a tropical look. Pawpaw fruit ripens from late summer to early fall, typically between September and October.

Taste and Flavor: The flesh of pawpaw is creamy with a custard-like texture and a flavor that's often compared to a mix of banana, mango, and melon. It contains several large, dark brown seeds and has a distinctive, tropical taste.

Nutritional Value: Pawpaw is rich in vitamins A and C, magnesium, potassium, and antioxidants. It's a nutritious fruit with a variety of health benefits.

Growing Conditions: Pawpaw trees thrive in moist, well-drained soil and require consistent watering, especially in their early years. They prefer full sun to partial shade and need at least two different trees for proper pollination, as they are not self-pollinating. Hand pollination can help improve fruit set.

Cultivation: Pawpaw trees are not self-pollinating and rely on flies and beetles for pollination. Planting two genetically distinct trees is essential for fruit production. The trees need consistent moisture and regular watering, especially during dry spells. They are relatively low maintenance once established.

Availability: Pawpaw fruits ripen between late summer and early fall, typically from September to October, and are best eaten shortly after ripening due to their short shelf life.

Culinary Uses: Pawpaw can be eaten fresh or used in a variety of recipes like baking, making ice cream, smoothies, and desserts. Its custard-like texture makes it a natural substitute for pudding in many dishes.

Interesting Facts: Pawpaw fruits were a crucial food source for Native Americans and early European settlers. The wood of the tree was also used to craft tools. Additionally, pawpaw's unique pollination system, relying on flies and beetles, makes hand pollination a common practice among growers.

Storage and Shelf Life: Pawpaw has a very short shelf life and should be eaten soon after ripening. To extend freshness, it can be refrigerated for a few days or frozen for longer-term storage.

Allergies and Precautions: Some people may experience digestive discomfort from pawpaw, but allergies to the fruit are relatively rare.

Fun Trivia: Pawpaw is the largest edible fruit native to North America, and it's even celebrated in festivals like the Ohio Pawpaw Festival. It has also been referenced in traditional Appalachian folk songs.

Pear

Name: Pear (*Pyrus* genus), a member of the Rosaceae family, related to apples and quince.

Overview: Pears are sweet, juicy fruits that have been cultivated for thousands of years. They are popular worldwide and highly valued for their flavor and versatility in cooking and baking, thriving in temperate climates.

Appearance: Pears typically have a bell shape, though varieties can vary. The skin color ranges from green to yellow, red, or brown, and it can be smooth or slightly grainy. The flesh is soft, juicy, and often grainy in texture.

Taste and Flavor: Pears are sweet, sometimes slightly tart, with a juicy, soft texture when ripe. Their flavor can vary between varieties, some being more delicate and floral while others are rich and spicy.

Nutritional Value: Pears are high in dietary fiber and provide a good amount of vitamin C and K. They are low in calories, making them a nutritious choice for many diets.

Growing Conditions: Pear trees thrive in temperate climates, needing cold winters and warm summers. They require 6-8 hours of full sun daily, and most varieties need a chilling period between 32°F and 45°F (0°C to 7°C) during dormancy for proper fruit development.

Cultivation: Pears are harvested when mature but firm, and they ripen off the tree. They are usually picked before fully ripening and left to soften at room temperature. Pear trees need well-drained soil and regular pruning to maintain tree health and fruit production.

Availability: Pears are typically harvested in late summer to early fall, depending on the variety, and are available fresh year-round due to global cultivation and storage.

Culinary Uses: Pears can be eaten fresh, poached, baked, or used in salads, desserts, and savory dishes. Their sweetness pairs well with cheese, nuts, and meats, making them a versatile ingredient in both sweet and savory recipes.

Interesting Facts: Pears have been cultivated since ancient times, with historical roots in both Europe and Asia. They are one of the few fruits that ripen off the tree, allowing them to be shipped long distances before reaching peak ripeness.

Storage and Shelf Life: Once ripe, pears should be refrigerated and will last for around 5 days. To speed up ripening, they can be placed in a paper bag at room temperature.

Allergies and Precautions: Pears are generally well-tolerated, though some individuals may experience mild oral allergies, particularly if they are sensitive to birch pollen.

Fun Trivia: Pear trees can live for over 100 years, and there are over 3,000 varieties of pears grown worldwide, each with its own unique flavor and texture.

Pecan

Name: Pecan (*Carya illinoensis*), a species of hickory native to North America.

Overview: Pecans are prized for their rich, buttery-flavored nuts and are widely cultivated in USDA Zones 6-9, thriving in areas with warm summers and mild winters. They are a significant agricultural crop in the southern United States, particularly in Georgia, Texas, and New Mexico.

Appearance: Pecans are smooth brown nuts with an edible kernel resembling a walnut. The tree produces both male and female flowers, but cross-pollination between different varieties is essential for good nut production.

Taste and Flavor: Pecans have a rich, buttery flavor and a slightly sweet, nutty taste. Their texture is crunchy, making them ideal for both sweet and savory dishes.

Nutritional Value: Pecans are rich in monounsaturated fats, which promote heart health. They are also high in vitamins A, E, B, and a good source of fiber and plant-based protein.

Growing Conditions: Pecans need full sun, requiring at least 6 hours of direct sunlight per day. They require a long, hot growing season and need regular watering during their early years. In dry climates, mature trees need supplemental watering to ensure proper nut production.

Cultivation: Pecan trees need compatible varieties for cross-pollination to produce nuts. Regular watering and full sun exposure are essential for tree health and nut yield. Pecans are also susceptible to diseases like pecan scab and powdery mildew, which can be managed with fungicides and proper care.

Availability: Pecans are harvested in the fall, usually from September to November, and they are available year-round thanks to storage and exports.

Culinary Uses: Pecans are versatile in the kitchen, commonly used in baking (like pecan pie), snacking, and confections. They are also popular in roasted snacks and savory dishes and can be added to salads or cereals.

Interesting Facts: The pecan tree is the state tree of Texas, and the U.S. is the world's largest producer of pecans, exporting them globally. Pecans have a rich history in the southern U.S., with cultivation dating back to Native Americans.

Storage and Shelf Life: Pecans last around 6 months at room temperature and up to 9 months in the refrigerator. Storing them in an airtight container can help extend their shelf life.

Allergies and Precautions: Pecans are a common tree nut allergen, so caution is advised for those with nut allergies.

Fun Trivia: Pecans were an important food source for Native Americans, and "pecan" comes from an Algonquin word meaning "a nut requiring a stone to crack."

[Persimmon](#)

Name: Persimmon (*Diospyros* spp.)

Alternate names: Fuyu (non-astringent), Hachiya (astringent)

Overview:

Persimmons are sweet and flavorful fruits originating from various species of the genus *Diospyros*. Known for their vibrant orange color, they offer a unique taste that can range from honey-like sweetness to astringency, depending on the variety. These fruits have a rich history and cultural significance, particularly in East Asia.

Appearance:

Persimmons are typically round to oval-shaped, resembling a tomato on the outside. They have smooth, shiny skin that turns a vibrant orange when ripe. The flesh inside varies in texture from firm to soft, depending on the variety. Non-astringent types, like Fuyu, remain firm, while astringent types, like Hachiya, become custard-like when fully ripe.

Taste and Flavor:

Persimmons provide a delightful flavor profile that can be sweet or astringent. Non-astringent varieties are often compared to apples, offering a crisp sweetness, while astringent varieties deliver a rich, honey-like taste once fully ripened. The contrast between the two makes them versatile for various culinary applications.

Nutritional Value:

Persimmons are rich in vitamins A and C, providing significant antioxidant benefits. They also contain potassium, manganese, copper, and phosphorus, contributing to heart health and immune function. The high fiber content supports digestive health, making them a nutritious addition to any diet.

Growing Conditions:

Persimmons thrive in warm, moderate climates, typically found in USDA Zones 7-10. They prefer full sun, requiring at least 6 hours of sunlight per day for optimal fruit production. While they can tolerate some shade, fruit yield may decrease. Well-drained, loamy soil is ideal, and they are sensitive to extreme cold.

Cultivation:

Persimmons can be propagated from seeds or cuttings. When planting, ensure sufficient space for air circulation. Some varieties are self-fertile, while others need cross-pollination. Pruning is essential to maintain tree shape and promote fruit production. Harvest occurs in the fall, from October to December, with care taken to avoid bruising the delicate fruit.

Availability:

Persimmons are typically available from October to December. They are commonly grown in East Asia, particularly China, Japan, and Korea, and are increasingly cultivated in Western countries, reflecting their growing popularity.

Culinary Uses:

Persimmons can be eaten fresh, either sliced or bitten into like an apple (Fuyu), or scooped out

when fully ripe (Hachiya). They can be used in baking, salads, and desserts, or dried for a chewy snack. Traditional dishes in East Asia often highlight persimmons, showcasing their versatility.

Interesting Facts:

Persimmons have been cultivated for centuries, particularly in East Asia, where they hold cultural significance. They symbolize longevity and are often used in traditional celebrations. Recently, they are gaining attention in Western culinary scenes for their health benefits and unique flavor.

Storage and Shelf Life:

To maximize shelf life, store persimmons at room temperature until ripe. Once ripe, they can be refrigerated to prolong freshness, ideally consumed within a week. Keep them away from ethylene-producing fruits to prevent premature ripening.

Allergies and Precautions:

While rare, some individuals may experience allergies to persimmons. Astringent varieties should be fully ripened before consumption to avoid an unpleasant, mouth-drying sensation.

Fun Trivia:

Did you know that persimmons are often referred to as "the fruit of the gods" in some cultures? Their sweet taste and vibrant color have made them a beloved treat throughout history, celebrated in art and literature.

Pomegranate

Name: Pomegranate (*Punica granatum*)

Overview:

Pomegranates are vibrant, nutrient-packed fruits known for their sweet, tart flavor and jewel-like seeds called arils. Originating from the Middle East and the Mediterranean region, pomegranates have been cultivated for thousands of years and are revered in various cultures for their health benefits and symbolic meaning.

Appearance:

Pomegranates are round with a tough, leathery skin that can range in color from bright red to deep purple. Inside, they are filled with hundreds of edible seeds surrounded by juicy, red pulp, separated by a white, spongy membrane.

Taste and Flavor:

The arils have a sweet-tart flavor, with a juicy burst when bitten into. The seeds inside the arils are crunchy and edible, though some people prefer to discard them.

Nutritional Value:

Pomegranates are rich in vitamins C and K, as well as a small amount of iron. They are used in

both sweet and savory dishes, providing numerous health benefits due to their antioxidant properties.

Growing Conditions:

Pomegranates thrive in hot, dry climates and are well-suited to USDA Zones 7-10. They are drought-tolerant once established but need sufficient warmth to produce fruit. Full sun exposure, with at least 6 hours of direct sunlight per day, is essential for flowering and fruiting.

Cultivation:

Pomegranates are usually harvested in the fall, between September and November, when the fruit reaches full color and produces a metallic sound when tapped. Proper care and attention to watering are important during the growing season.

Availability:

Pomegranates are typically available in the fall months, with peak harvest occurring from September to November.

Culinary Uses:

In Middle Eastern and Mediterranean cuisine, pomegranate molasses is a common ingredient in sauces, dressings, and glazes for meats. They can also be eaten fresh, juiced, or used in baking.

Interesting Facts:

The pomegranate appears in many religious texts and traditions, symbolizing prosperity, righteousness, and eternal life in Christianity, Judaism, and Islam.

Storage and Shelf Life:

To maximize shelf life, store pomegranates in a cool, dry place or in the refrigerator. They can last several weeks if stored properly. Once opened, the arils should be consumed within a few days for the best flavor.

Allergies and Precautions:

While pomegranates are generally safe, some individuals may experience allergies. The seeds can be hard to digest for some, so individuals with digestive issues may want to consume them in moderation.

Fun Trivia:

Pomegranates have been celebrated in art and literature throughout history, often depicted as symbols of abundance and fertility. In some cultures, they are also used in weddings and other celebrations to symbolize good fortune.

Sea Kale

Name: Sea Kale (*Crambe maritima*)

Overview:

Sea kale is a perennial vegetable native to the coasts of Europe, particularly the British Isles and northern France. It grows naturally in sandy or gravelly soils along seashores, making it tolerant of salty conditions. Historically, sea kale was a popular vegetable in 19th-century Europe, prized for its tender shoots and leaves. It has recently seen a resurgence in interest among gardeners and food enthusiasts due to its unique flavor and hardy nature.

Appearance:

Sea kale has large, broad, bluish-green leaves that resemble those of regular kale or cabbage. In the spring, it produces thick, tender white shoots that look similar to asparagus. When in bloom, it showcases small, fragrant white flowers in clusters, akin to other plants in the Brassicaceae family, like mustard or cabbage.

Taste and Flavor:

The young shoots and leaves have a mild, nutty, and slightly salty flavor, often compared to a cross between asparagus and broccoli. The young leaves can be used in salads, steamed, or cooked like other leafy greens. Older leaves are more fibrous and are typically utilized in soups or stir-fries.

Nutritional Value:

Sea kale is rich in vitamin C, vitamin K, and several B vitamins, contributing to its health benefits and making it a nutritious addition to meals.

Growing Conditions:

Sea kale thrives in temperate climates, typically in USDA Zones 4-9. It is hardy and can tolerate frosty winters as well as the salty air and soil found along coastal regions. It prefers slightly alkaline to neutral soils with a pH between 6.5 and 7.5.

Cultivation:

In early spring, sea kale is often blanched by covering the young shoots with a pot or other covering to exclude light. This process causes the shoots to turn pale and tender, similar to forced rhubarb or asparagus. The blanched shoots are highly prized for their delicate flavor.

Availability:

Sea kale is usually available in the spring when the young shoots are at their most tender and flavorful.

Culinary Uses:

The young leaves can be added to salads, steamed, or sautéed, while older leaves work well in soups and stir-fries. The shoots can be prepared similarly to asparagus.

Interesting Facts:

Sea kale has been celebrated for its resilience and unique flavor for centuries, making it an interesting addition to both traditional and modern cuisines. Its ability to thrive in salty conditions makes it an excellent choice for coastal gardens.

Storage and Shelf Life:

Sea kale can last a few days in the fridge but is best kept on the plant until ready for use to ensure maximum freshness and flavor.

Allergies and Precautions:

While generally safe, individuals with certain allergies to cruciferous vegetables should exercise caution. Always wash the leaves thoroughly before consumption to remove any salt or sand.

Fun Trivia:

Sea kale was once a common vegetable in Victorian gardens and is making a comeback as a gourmet ingredient in modern culinary practices, valued for both its taste and unique growing conditions.

Serviceberry

Name: Serviceberry (*Amelanchier* spp.)

Alternate names: Juneberry, Saskatoon berry, Shadberry

Overview:

Serviceberries are deciduous shrubs or small trees native to North America, prized for their attractive white spring blossoms, edible berries, and vibrant fall foliage. They are popular in ornamental landscaping as well as for their tasty fruit, which resembles blueberries in both appearance and flavor.

Appearance:

The berries of serviceberry are small, round, and turn dark purple or blue when ripe. They grow in clusters and typically ripen in early summer, usually in June, which is how they earned the name "Juneberry."

Taste and Flavor:

Serviceberries have a sweet flavor similar to blueberries, making them versatile for various culinary applications. Their texture and taste make them suitable for fresh eating, baking, and preserves.

Nutritional Value:

These berries are high in vitamins A and C, as well as iron, manganese, and calcium. Like most berries, serviceberries only last a few days in the refrigerator but can be dried or frozen to extend their shelf life.

Growing Conditions:

Serviceberries thrive in temperate and cooler climates, typically found in USDA Zones 4-8. They are cold-hardy and can tolerate freezing temperatures. While they are fairly drought-tolerant once established, they prefer consistent moisture, especially during fruit development. They grow best in full sun but can tolerate partial shade, with full sun encouraging better flowering and fruiting.

Cultivation:

Serviceberries prefer slightly acidic soils, with a pH of 5.5-7.0. Regular watering during the fruiting period will support better yields, and proper pruning can enhance fruit production and shape.

Availability:

Serviceberries are generally available in early summer, around June, when the berries are ripe.

Culinary Uses:

Serviceberries can be eaten fresh, used in baking, dried, or made into jams and preserves. Their flavor profile allows them to complement a variety of dishes and desserts.

Interesting Facts:

Serviceberries were historically used by Indigenous peoples for food and medicinal purposes. They are also noted for attracting pollinators, making them beneficial in garden ecosystems.

Storage and Shelf Life:

To maximize freshness, serviceberries should be stored in the refrigerator and consumed within a few days. They can be dried or frozen to prolong their shelf life for future use.

Allergies and Precautions:

Serviceberries are generally safe to eat, but individuals with allergies to similar berries should approach with caution. Always wash the berries thoroughly before consumption.

Fun Trivia:

The name "serviceberry" is thought to derive from the practice of holding funeral services in the spring when the trees were in bloom, as the berries ripen around the same time.

Sorrel

Name: Sorrel (*Rumex acetosa*)

Overview:

Sorrel is a hardy, perennial herb known for its tangy, lemony flavor. It is commonly used in culinary applications and has a long history in traditional medicine.

Appearance:

Sorrel plants produce lance-shaped, green leaves that can range from 4 to 10 inches long, depending on the species. The leaves are soft and tender when young but become tougher and more fibrous as they mature.

Taste and Flavor:

Sorrel leaves have a bright, tangy flavor, often compared to lemon or green apple, due to their high oxalic acid content. Younger leaves are milder, while older leaves have a sharper taste, making them versatile in various dishes.

Nutritional Value:

Sorrel is high in vitamin C. However, due to its oxalic acid content, consuming large amounts may not be advisable for individuals with kidney problems, as oxalic acid can contribute to the formation of certain types of stones.

Growing Conditions:

Sorrel thrives in cool, temperate climates, typically in USDA Zones 3-7. It is frost-tolerant and prefers slightly acidic soils with a pH of 5.5 to 7.0. While it grows best in full sun, it can also tolerate partial shade, particularly in hotter climates where afternoon shade can help prevent premature flowering.

Cultivation:

Young, tender leaves can be harvested once the plant reaches about 4 inches tall. Leaves can be picked individually, or the plant can be cut back entirely to encourage new growth. Regular harvesting and pruning prevent flowering, which can make the leaves bitter and less palatable.

Availability:

Sorrel is typically available in the spring and early summer, when the young leaves are at their most tender and flavorful.

Culinary Uses:

Sorrel is widely used in soups, salads, sauces, egg dishes, stews, and braises, particularly in European, Middle Eastern, and Asian cuisines. Its bright flavor adds a refreshing element to a variety of dishes.

Interesting Facts:

Historically, sorrel has been valued not only for its culinary uses but also for its medicinal properties, including digestive benefits and its use as a remedy for scurvy due to its high vitamin C content.

Storage and Shelf Life:

Fresh sorrel can be stored in the refrigerator for a few days. It is best used soon after harvest for optimal flavor and texture.

Allergies and Precautions:

Sorrel is generally safe to eat, but individuals with a history of kidney stones or certain dietary restrictions should consume it in moderation due to its oxalic acid content.

Fun Trivia:

In some cultures, sorrel is used in traditional dishes, such as the French soup "soupe aux herbes," highlighting its historical significance in various culinary traditions.