

Juneberries are at your “Service”

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Edible landscapes are becoming popular across the country and right here in northeast Nebraska where canning or freezing local fruit is making a comeback. Fruit bearing trees such as apples, pears, and peaches are common to see, but what about fruit bearing shrubs? We have chokecherries and plums, but what about something that you don't see much of like Saskatoons! What? You have never heard of this extremely hardy shrub that is considered native to Nebraska? Well then, have you heard it called by Juneberry or Serviceberry? Sounds familiar but you need a quick refresher, well then get ready for a crash course on these durable shrubs.

Growing to heights of 6 to 15 feet tall, Juneberry is a tough shrub that can be planted and is adaptable to a wide variety of soil types from sandy loams to loams to silt loams. It is best to avoid clay soils and pure sandy soils. However, if you have sandy soils you may be in luck, but you will need to provide extra water in the form of drip irrigation to reduce foliar diseases that can occur with conventional irrigation from a sprinkler system or overhead irrigation system. They will bloom white flowers in early spring around the first to late parts of May with the fruit ripening in July.

The fruit itself has been compared to taste like a blueberry or even an apple that has been crossed with blueberries. It is best to pick or harvest the berries when two-thirds of the berries are fully ripened since they will continue to ripen after they are picked. When collecting the fruit, make sure to use containers that are no more than 6 inches deep to avoid damage to the berries as they are very delicate and don't be surprised to find out you will be harvesting each bush about three times over several weeks because not all berries on the same bush will ripen at the same time. Timing for collecting the berries is crucial and the best time to pick is in the morning while the berries are dry, cool, and the weather is not too warm for them to take.

What about fertilizing? If you think your Juneberries need to be fertilized it is best to have a soil test done to see what nutrients are lacking and have a specific fertilizer prescription made up specifically for your site. Fertilizing just because you think it should be done is not a good justification for doing it and most of the time what the shrub really needs is to be pruned back by taking 1/3 to ¼ of the stems off at ground level, especially those stems that are over 10 feet tall and declining with the amount of fruit production that is completed. This practice of removing 1/3 to ¼ of the stems yearly or every other year is something that is done on most fruit producing shrubs and can continue onto the following year until you are on a good pruning schedule to produce good vigorous growth. It is the 2 to 4 year old stems that will produce the best fruit production. In the landscape you will modify this technique by pruning to remove dead or damaged stems and strive to have an open, vase shape shrub that spreads out equal to the height of the shrub itself.

In the fall the leaves will turn oranges to red and right before they finally fall of the stems they will turn brown. It is a beautiful shrub for the fall and spring.

Now this is all good information, but what are Juneberries used for? Well they can be used for jams, jellies, and pastries just to name a few. Most commonly they are eaten right off the plant.

Here is a recipe for Juneberry Muffins:

¾ c. sugar
¼ c. soft shortening
1 egg
2 c. flour
2 tsp. baking powder
½ tsp. salt
1 c. milk

Blend ingredients and add 2 cups of Juneberries, mix together and put in greased pans.
Top with crumb mixture:

1/3 c. sugar
½ tsp. cinnamon
1/3 c. flour
¼ c. soft butter

Bake for 20 minutes at 425 degrees



Serviceberry Shrub. Picture from www.backyardbirdlover.com



Serviceberry Shrub. Photo From www.pinterest.com