

BERRY PICKING



The Western Upper Peninsula is a great place for picking berries. Over a million acres of public land is open to berry picking in the nearby Gogebic County Forest and Ottawa National Forest. July and August are the best time to find ripe berries. You can eat them fresh or take them home for freezing, canning, or baking into pies. Here are some local berries:

Blueberries: We have two common blueberries; low-bush blueberry and velvet-leaf blueberry. Both are common in sandy pine habitats. Lowbush blueberry also occurs in bogs.

Raspberries: Wild red raspberries are easy to find along logging roads and upland openings in the forest. Numbers increase after timber harvest.

Blackberries: Blackberries grow in the same habitats as raspberries, but are less common and are usually bigger. Blackberries ripen a little later than raspberries. Beware of their large and unforgiving thorns.

Thimbleberries: This is a less-common berry and difficult to collect in large numbers because the fruits tend to come apart in your hand. Look for this one in upland hardwood-hemlock forests near Lake Superior, and eat them as you find them. The plant is easy to recognize due to its large, maple-shaped leaves.

Strawberries: The wild strawberry is frequent along forest roads and in meadows, although the berries are small and soon eaten by wildlife after ripening. Watch out for this one as an unexpected treat when you're out in the woods but don't plan to find enough for a pie. Strawberries are one of the earliest berries, ripening in mid to late June.

Other fruits: Some other fruits and berries you can find include gooseberries, dewberries, wintergreen berries, juneberries, currants, cherries, plums, high-bush cranberries, wild grapes, rosehips and creeping snowberry. Consult an identification guide to recognize all our different fruits and learn more about their local habitats. Be sure of what you are picking since there are some poisonous berries in our woods.

Maps of the Ottawa National Forest are available at the Supervisor's Office, E6248 US 2 (East of Grand View Hospital).

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