

Welcome!

...to some of the best berry-picking country in the Northwest. This brochure is meant to increase your enjoyment and appreciation of huckleberry fields on the Gifford Pinchot National Forest. Please take a moment to learn about the rules, history and culture of berry picking. It will make your outing more enjoyable.

The Huckleberry

Twelve species of huckleberries grow in Washington and Oregon. They are often grouped into plants producing red or blue berries, and plants that produce berries in clusters or individually on the twig.

The most sought-after huckleberry is the thin-leaved huckleberry (*Vaccinium membranaceum*) This species is renowned for its large, sweet, purple berries, occurring singly on the plant. The peak season for picking huckleberries occurs between mid-August to mid-September.

The map on the reverse side provides you with a general idea of the location of major berry fields on the Forest. You'll likely find some huckleberries growing in other locations in the Forest also.

The map also indicates an Indian berry-picking area. This area was reserved in 1932 for use by Indians.

Harvest Regulations

Each harvester is allowed three gallons of huckleberries free of charge per year. If larger quantities are wanted, or if you plan to sell your berries or berry products (jams, ice cream, fruit-leather or other commercial items), a Special Forest Products Permit is required and available at your local Ranger District or Monument Headquarters. The Gifford Pinchot National Forest does not start issuing commercial huckleberry permits until mid-August.

Mechanical removal of berries is not allowed. (Rakes or other brush disturbing devices.) Harvesting of berries is allowed on the majority of lands on the Forest. Areas closed to harvest include Wilderness, Research Natural Areas, Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument and the Mineral Block. Detailed maps are available at your local Ranger Districts.

Please respect lands reserved as American Indian harvest areas.

History

For thousands of years, American Indians spent summer and fall high in the mountains hunting, fishing, picking berries, and celebrating the plentiful gifts of the land. Once every few years, they burned the berry fields after harvest, to kill invading trees and to insure healthy fields the following year. The Indians in this area regard the rituals of picking, preserving, and eating berries as a cultural and traditional use with religious significance.

An area in the Sawtooth Berry Fields was reserved in 1932 by a handshake agreement between Yakama Indian Chief William Yallup and Gifford Pinchot National Forest Supervisor J.R. Bruckart for use by Indians. By understanding the historical significance of this area, we hope you pay close attention to the signs indicating the areas reserved for use by the Indians. By doing so, you are respecting the culture of another people.

Development of the Berry Fields

Thousands of years ago, uncontrolled wildfires created openings in the vast forest. Huckleberries prospered in the sunlight caused by these natural openings. For countless years, repeated fires caused by lightning or set by Indians killed the invading trees and brush. But the forest is constantly trying to reclaim its lost territory. If it were not for fire, the berry fields of today would have long since been reclaimed by the forest. Today, scientists are trying to determine the best method of maintaining huckleberries as a valuable forest resource.

Safety First

Be safety-minded; think before doing.

- ✓ Carry a light "survival kit" with matches, flashlight, map, compass, whistle, and first-aid kit.
- ✓ Inform someone where you're going and when you plan to return. Make sure your vehicle is in good running condition, and take sufficient gasoline for the trip.
- ✓ Obey Forest regulations. They are designed for your benefit.
- ✓ Be careful with fire.
- ✓ Drive carefully. Forest roads are often narrow, winding and congested.

Questions and Answers

Where can I find the sweetest berries?

Everyone has their own idea on the best way to find sweet berries. Many people believe berries grown in the shade are the sweetest. However, based on an experiment in 1974, two scientists concluded that berry sweetness was not significantly affected by shade.

What causes some years to be better than others for berry crops?

Apparently, short-term weather patterns are more important than soil, topography, and climate in creating high and low quality berry crops. To a large extent the depth and duration of the previous winter snow pack, the occurrence of killing frosts, and such unpredictable events as hailstorms often determine the quality of a particular year's crop.

Are camping facilities available in the area?

More than 57 campgrounds and 12 picnic areas are maintained by the Gifford Pinchot National Forest. The Forest Recreation Map details the location of these campgrounds. Three campgrounds - Cold Springs, Surprise Lakes and Meadow Creek - are traditionally used by Indians in late summer and fall.

How can I tell when they're ripe?

When the berries are plump, deep purple, and sweet to the taste.

When is the best time to pick?

That varies by year. Generally, middle to late August is the best time.



United States Department of Agriculture

Forest Service

Huckleberry Picking



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