

A Few Fruits and Berries for Truckee

Strawberry-Rhubarb Pie. Vanilla Ice cream smothered with warm plum-crabapple sauce. Chokecherry jelly on sourdough toast. Plump raspberries. Fresh, crisp, juicy apples. And that's just some of the sweet stuff.

Space in your yard can yield so much more than just visual beauty, it can yield a bounty which you can eat. Herbs and vegetables, above and below ground both tender annuals and hardy perennials. Berries of many kinds on high bush and low bush or vines and canes.

In his Introduction, Louis Hill in "Cold Climate Gardening" relates a story so often heard in our nursery which goes something like this.

"I've just planted hardy grapes" a neighbor tells me.

"I wish you'd talked with us first" I reply sadly.

"I was afraid you'd talk me out of it. The catalog said they were hardy way up in Canada and when I called they assured me that they would do fine in our climate."

"Unfortunately they usually do not even survive in our climate and the few which have may never produce fruit."

It is sometimes difficult to accept the reality of our climate (Repeat after me: "There is no average last date of frost"). Too often people only want the good news and are bothered that we would attempt to talk them out of their well researched endeavor. Often people will bring up plants from Reno, assured of success, then have crop failures and plant losses year after year, and believe that **they** have done something wrong. The fact is that we are very limited by our climate. On the bright side however there are still many plants if you know which ones, which easily produce fruit, even in our seemingly impossible climate.

I'd like to mention a few of my favorite, easy to grow, perennial vegetables and herbs and then a few of the best producing bush fruits and berries.

Perennial vegetables include Asparagus which may take 2 to 3 years to produce but will get better every year. Eat as much fresh as you can and freeze the rest.

Horseradish is vigorous and outstanding - if you enjoy this herb plant yourself a patch because when it is fresh it will blow your sinuses out.

"German Celery" clumps grow to 6' tall and several feet across. The tender leaflets have a wonderful mild celery flavor for seasoning, stews, salads, potatoes etc. and can be frozen for use any time of the year. (I'm told this is the base of the "Maggi" seasoning.)

Rhubarb grows with a little care year after year producing more and more leaves with the succulent red stalks. This plant is never eaten by deer or squirrels.

Vigorous Perennial Herbs include catnip, chives, comfrey, lavender, mints, oregano, sage, sorrel, tarragon, thyme. There are many lesser known medicinal and flavoring herbs which will also thrive in Truckee including valerian, tansy, absinthe and sweet woodruff.

Berries

Of the bramble berries, red raspberry is the best. They require only minimal care, grow fast and are a reliable producer.

Strawberries are a must if you are planning on having rhubarb. There is no reason why every person living in Truckee shouldn't have a patch or a pot planted with strawberries. They produce well and have beautiful red fall color as a groundcover. The wild alpine varieties are small but have many times the flavor of their hybrid cousins.

The bush fruits can be appreciated for their usefulness in any landscape with the added benefit of producing large amounts of colorful delicious fruit.

Currants and gooseberries are never bothered by frosts they may be on bushes from 1ft to 6ft with many colors of flower and great shades of fall colors and they all yield abundantly.

Elderberry bushes may reach a height of 8 ft. or more and grow twice as wide and produce many pounds of tiny fruit. If you freeze whole clusters of the ripe berries the berries just fall off the tiny stems.

Serviceberry is a close relative of mt. ash and pear. The fruit looks like a blueberry though not quite as sweet, is a native plant in the Sierras and produces very similar fruit.

Cranberry Bush, Highbush Cranberry is not related to the commercial cranberry. It is a north American Viburnum similar to the European Snowball bush.

Tree fruits are the stuff of orchards. There are many varieties of apple, a few pear, cherry and plumb. and there is even a Manchurian apricot which in the right location with the right weather may produce tiny apricots. More on the fruit trees some other time.

Your own yard is unique in many ways and if you have a neighbor who lives near by and you notice a garden, stop and talk to the gardener and learn what has worked in your neck of the woods. And I don't mean to discourage experimentation for I certainly do it, but do it small. Don't invest vast sums of time and money on a slight chance that a planting will survive. If you read this and you have or know of a unique fruiting plant in the Truckee area, please let us know. By the way, has anybody grown butternut in Truckee?

Local Native Berries:

Western Chokecherry - 10-20', bitter fruit but large and edible in jelly

Sierra Plumb - *Prunus subcordata* - 1" red or yellow sweet fruit - Plumas to Modoc Co.'s

Serviceberry - sweet but not so tasty - 3-15' - 2500-9000'

Thimbleberry - *Rubus parv.* - 3-6' - edible and delicious

Western raspberry - *R. leucodermis* - 3-6' - to 7000'

Western blueberry - *Vaccinium. occidentale* - wet places - huckleberry, hard to find.

Blue Elderberry - *Sambucus nigra ssp. cerulea* - 4-20' - on dry slopes

Wild strawberry - *fragaria virginiana* - a great, fast growing groundcover.

Type	Name	USDA Zone	Blooming Time	Fruiting Time	Fruit Color	Descriptions
Apple	Centennial	3		Summer-Fall	Red-Orange	2" fruit. Excellent eating or cooking
Apple	Chestnut	3		Summer-Fall	Bronze-Red	Large w/ wonderful flavor.
Apple	Cortland Esopus	4	Mid	Fall-Winter	Bright Red	Medium size, crisp, juicy.
Apple	Spitzenberg	3				
Apple	Haralred'	3	Late	Summer	Deep Red	Hardy. Firm, juicy, tart, and a good keeper.
Apple	Haralson	3	Late	Winter	Red	Juicy. Very hardy
Apple	Hazen	3	Early	Summer	Red	7-10' tree. Juicy, mild flavor. Very Hardy
Apple	Honeycrisp McIntosh	4	Mid	Fall-Winter	Yellow w/ Red	3-4" fruit. Crisp.
Apple	Red	4	Mid	Fall-Winter	Deep Red	Tender, Juicy, heavy producer. Dwarf. Pick B4 mature for excellent preserving.
Apple	Norland Yellow	3	Early	Summer	Red	
Apple	Transparent	4	Early	Summer	Green-Yellow	Tart. Heavy producer.
Pear	Luscious	3			Bright Yellow	Small dessert pear
Pear	Patten	4		Summer-Fall	Yellow	Large juicy fruit. Very hardy.
Pear	Summercrisp	4		Summer	Green w/ Red	Small. Harvest early. Sweet and crisp.
Pear	Ure	3		Summer-Fall	Green-Yellow	Small, juicy. Sturdy branching.

Dark Sweet Cherries (Tart Cherries)

Tart (Sour) cherries, are too sour for some individuals to be eaten fresh. I like them and Europeans usually eat them fresh. They are used in cooking, cakes, tarts, and pies. Also dried sour cherries are commonly used in cooking. When used in combination with sugar, it balances the acidity and brings out the fruit's aroma and flavor.

Montmorency

Montmorency very early ripening, growing fruit with shiny red skin, bright yellow flesh and clear juice starting in late July. This variety is hardy from zone 4 to 8, grows from 8 to 15 feet high with a 10- to 20-foot spread and is able to withstand colder temperatures better than other varieties. The Montmorency cherry is perfect for pies, preserves and as a candied snack.

Evans Bali

Evans Bali cherry tree is a dwarf variety that produces dark red 1-inch fruit that is perfect for jams, sauces and snacking because of its exceptional sweetness. Growing to 12 feet in height with a span of 9 feet, Evans trees are exceptionally cold hardy and thrive in zones 3 through 8. Harvest begins in July, though if the fruit is left to ripen and harvested later, it increases in sweetness.

Dwarf North Star

The Dwarf North Star cherry tree is a smaller, cold-hardy variety created by the University of Minnesota in 1950. Ripening in late July, disease-resistant North Star cherries are well suited for pies, baking and as candied snacks. The North Star tree grows from 8 to 10 feet in height and is hardy in zones 4 through 8.