CRANBERRY

Vaccinium macrocarpon
[vak-SIN-ee-um mak-roh-KAR-pon]
(syn Oxycoccus macrocarpos, Vaccinium oxycoccus)

Family: Ericaceae

Names: American Cranberry, Bog Cranberry, Large Cranberry, Moss Cranberry, Small Cranberry, True Cranberry

Description: A low trailing shrub, grows in open bogs and swamps and on wet shores. It flowers from June to August and fruits from September to November. It is hardy to zone 2. It is in leaf all year, in flower from June to August, and the seeds ripen from August to October. The flowers are hermaphrodite and are pollinated by insects. The plant is self-fertile.

Cultivation: Requires a moist or semi-boggy lime free soil, preferring one that is rich in peat or a light loamy soil with added leaf-mold. Prefers a very acid soil with a pH in the range of 4 to 4.5, plants soon become chlorotic when lime is present. Plants grow best in a poor soil, richer soils result in extra foliage production at the expense of fruit. Succeeds in full sun or light shade though it fruits better in a sunny position. Requires shelter from strong winds. A very dwarf shrub producing long slender creeping stems that root into the soil. Upright stems grow from the axillary buds in the second year and these upright stems flower and fruit the following year. Widely cultivated for its edible fruit in N. America, there are many named varieties. Cultivated plants are usually grown in artificial bogs that are often flooded in the winter. Plants can self-fertilize but cross-fertilization by insects results in higher yields. Cultivated plants take about 5 years to come into full bearing but will then crop well for 60 - 100 years. Dislikes root disturbance, plants are best grown in pots until being planted out in their permanent positions. Plants in this genus are notably resistant to honey fungus.

Seed are sown in late winter in a greenhouse in a lime-free potting mix and only just cover the seed. Stored seed might require a period of up to 3 months cold stratification. Another report says that it is best to sow the seed in a greenhouse as soon as it is ripe. Once they are about 5cm tall, prick the seedlings out into individual pots and grow them on in a lightly shaded position in the greenhouse for at least their first winter. Plant them out into their permanent positions in late spring or early summer, after the last expected frosts. Cuttings in April of shoots 15cm long, in a sandy mix in a frame covered in plastic to keep them moist. Cuttings of half-ripe wood, 5 - 8cm with a heel, August in a frame. Slow and difficult. Layering in late summer or early autumn. Another report says that spring is the best time to layer. Takes 18 months. Division of suckers in spring or early autumn.
History: “Craneberfies” is the name early New Englanders gave to *Oxycoccus* fruits due to the resemblance of the blossoms and stems to the neck and face of a crane. Eventually the name shortened to “cranberries.” Various Indian tribes used cranberries as food, gathering them green and storing them in damp moss. Fruits were also used as a means of barter.

Constituents: Cranberry prevents E. coli, the most common cause of Urinary tract infections (UTIs) and recurrent UTIs, from adhering to the cells lining the wall of the bladder. This anti-adherence action renders the bacteria harmless in the urinary tract. The constituents in cranberry responsible for this anti-adherence activity have yet to be identified.

Medicinal Uses: The common cranberry is one of nature’s best weapons against cystitis and urinary tract infections. For years, doctors have routinely advised patients to drink cranberry juice to prevent urinary infections. It is cited as an effective remedy for this problem in the *U.S. Pharmacopeia*. At one time, scientists believed that cranberry acidified the urine, and in the process, killed invading bacteria that could cause infection. However, Dr. Anthony Sabota, a scientist at Youngstown State University in Ohio, offered another possible explanation. His studies suggest that cranberry prevents bacteria from sticking to the wall of the bladder, thus flushing the potential troublemakers out of the body before they can do their damage. An infusion of the branches has been used as a treatment for pleurisy.

Dosage: take 1-3 times daily. Or look for unsweetened cranberry juice or cranberry-apple juice combination. People often take one capsule or tablet of a concentrated cranberry juice extract two to four times per day. Several glasses (16 ounces total) of a high-quality cranberry juice (not the cocktail) each day can approximate the effect of the cranberry concentrate.

Toxicity: There are no known side effects with cranberry concentrate, and it is safe for use during pregnancy and lactation. Cranberry should not be used as a substitute for antibiotics during an acute urinary tract infection.

Ritual Uses: Herb of Neptune. The mythology of Finland contains a legend involving the cranberry with virgin birth. Marjatta, a maiden goddess, gives birth to a child conceived through her eating of a cranberry. Cranberries are well-suited for the Yule celebration. It is possibly their traditional use in the decorating of holiday trees which shares common bonds with the Finnish story.

Other Uses: The cranberry is a good source of red dye.

Culinary Uses: Fruit - raw or cooked. It can also be dried for winter use. Rich in vitamin C, the fruit is too acid for most peoples tastes to be eaten raw, so it is mainly used in pies, preserves etc. It is said that a teaspoon of salt added to the cooking fruit can take the place of half the sugar normally used. Cranberries add flavor to nut breads and cakes. They can be juiced for a refreshing vitamin C-laden beverage. Dry the sweetened pulp for a fruit leather.

The storage quality of cranberries is outstanding. Berries can be kept in good condition throughout the winter just by placing the firm unwashed fruits in covered containers or porous cloth sacks in a cool place. You can also freeze your harvest. Berries can also be preserved by drying.

Recipes: Buckingham Pies
Makes 8 small pies
Pastry:
3 ½ cups all-purpose flour
¾ cup lard
1/3 cup water
1 tsp salt
Filling:
¾ cup turkey
½ cup ham
3/4 cup pork  
2 Tbsp sage and onion stuffing  
1 egg, beaten  
2 tsp salt  
1 tsp pepper  
2 Tbsp water  
Topping:  
1 Tbsp gelatin  
2/3 cup water  
pinch of salt  
pinch of pepper  
3 cups fresh, whole cranberries

First, make the pastry. Put the flour in a bowl, and using two knives or a pastry blender, cut into it 1/2 cup off the lard, until the mixture resembles coarse bread crumbs. Place the rest of the lard, the water, and the salt in a saucepan and bring to a boil. Immediately add the boiling liquid to the flour-lard mixture and stir with a fork. When the liquid has been completely absorbed, shape the dough into a ball, wrap it in wax paper, and let it cool in the refrigerator for at least 20 minutes.

Meanwhile, make the filling. Mince or finely chop all the meats, then mix them thoroughly with the other ingredients, adding the water last.

Then, thoroughly grease an 8-cup muffin tin and preheat the oven to 375F. Roll out the cooled pastry and cut into 8 circles 5 inches in diameter and 1/8 inch thick, or mold into flat rounds with your hands. Cut a radius line in each of the circles to facilitate fitting them into the cups of the muffin tin. Fill each pastry case 2/3 full of the meat mixture and press it down firmly. Bake the pies for 30 minutes, then remove them from the oven and immediately run a knife around the edge of each pie. This makes it easier to remove the pies later. While they are cooling, make the gelatin, following the instructions on the gelatin packet. When it is ready, pour it on the top of each pie, then put the muffin tin into the refrigerator for 20 minutes, or until the gelatin has set. Decorate the top of each pie with cranberries, then glaze with more topping and again cool until set. (Wild Foods)

Cranberry Sauce  
1 pint cranberries  
1/4 pint water  
2 oz caster sugar  
1 Tbsp redcurrant jelly  
2 Tbsp port  

Put the washed cranberries in a pan with the water and simmer gently for 30 minutes, then add the rest of the ingredients. Bring to the boil, skim and strain. May be served either hot or cold. (Food from the Countryside)

Cranberry Chile Salsa  
1 bag cranberries  
2-3 cloves of garlic  
1-2 jalapeno chilies  
4 Tbsp finely chopped cilantro  
3 green onions, minced  
1/3 cup lime juice  
1/2 cup sugar  
salt and pepper  

Boil cranberries in 1 quart of water for 1 minute. Drain well. Mince garlic, then seed and mince jalapenos. Combine with the cilantro, onions, and cranberries in a large bowl. Mix, add lime juice, sugar, and salt and pepper. (The California Wine Country Herbs and Spices Cookbook)

Lemon Cranberry Chutney  
1 medium lemon  
12 oz fresh cranberries  
2 Tbsp grated fresh ginger  
1/2 cup finely chopped onion  
1 small jalapeno pepper, seeded and minced  
1 garlic clove, minced  
1/2 tsp cinnamon  
2 cups sugar  
1/2 tsp dry mustard  
1/2 tsp salt (optional)  
1/2 cup chopped walnuts  

Grate the zest of the lemon and set aside. Peel the white from the whole lemon and discard. Cut the lemon in half, remove seeds, and dice. Combine all ingredients except walnuts in a stainless steel saucepan. Bring to a boil. Stir to dissolve sugar. Simmer until cranberries pop and chutney is thickened. Cool and add walnuts. (Lemon Herbs)
Cranberry Relish
2 cups cranberries
1 orange
1 cup pineapple
1 cup cleaned rose hips
½ cup walnuts
½ cup honey
2 Tbsp lemon juice
In food grinder with medium blade, grind cranberries, orange, pineapple, rose hips and walnuts. Add honey and lemon juice. Mix well. Let stand 24 hours to blend flavors. (Discovering Wild Plants)

Zippy Cranberry Crostinis
1 ½ cup cranberries
½ cup sugar
4 Tbsp horseradish
1 French bread loaf
2 Tbsp olive oil
4 oz cream cheese
Cook cranberries in water until skins pop. Drain and mash with sugar, lemon rind and horseradish. Cool. Slice French bread into ½” slices; brush each side with oil and bake at 400F for 8-10 minutes. Cool. To serve, spread toast with cream cheese and top with cranberry mixture. (Parsley, Sage, Rosemary and Mine)

Cranberry Bread
Sift together:
3 ¾ cups unbleached flour
2 cups sugar
4 tsp baking powder
1 tsp baking soda
2 ½ tsp salt
Blend in:
2 cups halved cranberries
1 cup chopped pecans
1 cup fine wheat germ
grated peel from 4 large oranges (6 Tbsp)
Combine:
2 eggs, slightly beaten
1 cup orange juice
½ cup warm water
¼ cup corn oil
Stir into flour mixture until just moistened. Spoon into 2 greased loaf pans and bake in 350F oven 50-60 minutes. Bred is done when loaf pulls away from sides of pan. Cool on rack 5 minutes and turn out onto rack. (The Edible Ornamental Garden)

Chuck Roast with Cranberries
Sprinkle with:
Flour and Beau Monde seasoning
1 4-lb beef chuck roast
In a Dutch oven brown roast on all sides in
1 Tbsp rendered beef fat or corn oil
Remove roast and in the same pan brown:
¼ cup each diced onion, carrot and celery with leaves
½ tsp sugar
Add:
1/3 cup each dry red wine and beef stock
½ tsp salt
¼ tsp freshly ground black pepper
Return meat to skillet. Cover, lower heat and cook slowly 1 – 1 ½ hours or until meat is almost tender, adding more stock if needed. Then add:
2 Tbsp frozen concentrated orange juice
1 tsp sugar
½ tsp Worcestershire sauce
1 ½ to 2 cups cranberries
Cover and cook 7 minutes until cranberries are soft. Remove meat and force juices and vegetables through sieve or food mill back into the cooking pan. Slice meat, return to sauce and cook, covered 5-10 minutes. Adjust seasonings and transfer to heated serving platter. Sprinkle with:
¼ cup minced parsley
Serve with rice, barley or mashed or baked potatoes. (The Edible Ornamental Garden)

Cranberry Liqueur
2 cups sugar
1 cup water
1 bag cranberries, coarsely chopped
1 tsp grated orange rind
3 cups vodka
Combine sugar and water and bring to a boil over low heat. Simmer, stirring constantly, until sugar is dissolved. Stir in cranberries and orange rind. Cool. Combine sugar syrup/cranberry mix with vodka and cover
Cranberry Chocolate Roulade
5 eggs, separated
5 oz caster sugar
8 oz plain chocolate, broken into pieces
3 fl oz water
Filling
4 oz sugar
3 Tbsp fresh orange juice
3 Tbsp water
8 oz cranberries, topped and tailed
2 Tbsp Grand Marnier or Cointreau
1/2 pint whipping cream, whipped
icing sugar, sifted to finish

Line a large roasting tin with non-stick silicone or greased wax paper. Put the egg yolks with the sugar in a heatproof bowl set over a saucepan of simmering water. Whisk until light and fluffy. Melt the chocolate in a separate ovenproof bowl over a pan of simmering water. Allow to cool slightly, then stir into the egg yolk mixture. Whisk the egg whites until stiff. Using a large metal spoon, fold one spoonful of whipped egg white into the chocolate mixture, then lightly fold in the remainder. Spoon the mixture evenly into the lined tin and bake in a preheated hot oven for about 15 minutes, until cooked. Turn out the sponge onto wax paper sprinkled with caster sugar and quickly peel off the lining paper. Trim off the crisp edges and immediately roll up from one short edge. Carefully unroll and leave to cool completely on a wire tray. Meanwhile, put the sugar, orange juice and water into a saucepan. Add the cranberries and cook gently for about 10 minutes, until tender. Remove from the heat and leave to cool completely. Lay the sponge on a board or work surface. Sprinkle with a little of the cranberry cooking liquid. Using a slotted spoon, spoon the cranberries over the surface of the sponge. Sprinkle the Grand Marnier over then spread with whipped cream. Roll up from a short end and dust thickly with icing sugar. Carefully transfer to a serving plate and cut into slices to serve. (The Encyclopedia of Herbs, Spices and Flavorings)

Chocolate, Cranberry and Lavender Bread
2 cups milk, warmed to about 115F
2 Tbsp unsalted butter, very soft
1/3 cup granulated sugar
1 tsp coarse salt
2 tsp instant yeast or 1 package very fresh active dry yeast
1/2 cup Dutch-process cocoa
5 1/2 to 6 1/2 cups unbleached all-purpose flour, divided
1 1/2 tsp dried lavender, crushed with your fingers
3/4 cup semisweet chocolate chips
1 cup dried cranberries

Put the milk and butter in a large bowl. In another bowl, stir together the sugar, salt, yeast, cocoa and 4 cups flour; stir into milk mixture with a wooden spoon or a mixer. Stir in enough remaining flour, 1/2 cup at a time, as needed to form a shaggy, firm, but not dry dough. Turn dough out onto a lightly floured surface and knead for about 8 minutes, until dough is smooth, satiny, and elastic, adding flour as needed. Flatten dough into a large disk; top with lavender, chocolate chips, and cranberries, and fold dough over to enclose them. Knead just until incorporated. Place dough in a clean, lightly greased bowl, and cover directly with greased plastic wrap. Set aside at a warm room temperature to rise until dough is doubled (when doubled, dough will not spring back with a finger is pressed into it), about 1 1/2 to 2 hours. Meanwhile, grease 2 8-by-4-inch loaf pans. Gently punch dough down and divide it in half. Pat each half into an oval and plump by stretching the sides down and tucking under. Place in prepared pans; again, cover directly with greased plastic wrap. Set aside at a warm room temperature to rise until dough is doubled (when doubled, dough will not spring back with a finger is pressed into it), about 1 1/2 to 2 hours. Meanwhile, grease 2 8-by-4-inch loaf pans. Gently punch dough down and divide it in half. Pat each half into an oval and plump by stretching the sides down and tucking under. Place in prepared pans; again, cover directly with greased plastic wrap and let rise until almost doubled. Meanwhile, preheat oven to 350F. Remove the plastic wrap and bake loaves for 40-45 minutes, until they sound almost hollow when bottom is tapped; remove from pans and cool on a wire rack. (Morning Glories)
**Cranberry Sherbert**
Mix 2 cups of buttermilk, ¼ cup lemon juice, ½ cup sugar, 1 ½ cups white Karo corn syrup, and freeze to mush. Meanwhile cook 1 cup of cranberries in very little water with 1 tsp sugar and some grated lemon peel. When cool, squash berries coarsely with masher of wooden spoon. Remove mush from freezer, beat smooth, add berries, beat again, return to fridge and freeze firm. When you serve, each portion should have on top a fresh violet, or candied violet, or violet leaf, or candied rosebud, or tiny piece of candied ginger, or a mint leaf, or a lavender leaf. (Hints and Pinches)

**Cranberry Salsa**
1 6- oz can orange juice concentrate, thawed, undiluted
1 cup cranberries, fsh
2 red bell peppers, chopped
1 red chili pepper, chopped (optional)
1 clove garlic, minced
½ cup cilantro leaves
1 Tbsp cumin seeds (or 1 tsp ground cumin)
In a food processor bowl fitted with a steel blade, combine all ingredients and process until well blended. Ingredients may also be chopped coarsely by hand. Divide salsa among jars and store in refrigerator until needed. (Herb Sauces, Salsas and Such)

**Lemon Cranberry Chutney**
1 medium lemon
12 oz fresh cranberries
2 Tbsp grated fresh ginger
½ cup finely chopped onion
1 small jalapeno pepper, seeded and minced
1 garlic clove, minced
½ tsp cinnamon
2 cups sugar
½ tsp dry mustard
½ tsp salt (optional)
½ cup chopped walnuts
Grate the zest of the lemon and set aside. Peel the white from the whole lemon and discard. Cut the lemon in half, remove seeds, and dice. Combine all ingredients except walnuts in a stainless steel saucepan. Bring to a boil. Stir to dissolve sugar. Simmer until cranberries pop and chutney is thickened. Cool and add walnuts. (Lemon Herbs)

**Cranberry Cobbler**
1 ¼ cups sugar
3 Tbsp cornstarch
1 quart cranberries
¼ tsp vanilla
1 cup flour
1 ½ tsp baking powder
1 tsp sugar
3 Tbsp shortening
½ cup milk
Add 1 ¼ cups of sugar and the cornstarch in a small saucepan. Mix in the cranberries and vanilla. Cook over a medium heat, stirring constantly, until the mixture thickens and boils. Stir for one additional minutes. Pour into a 2 quart baking dish. Mix together, the flour, 1 tsp of sugar, and baking powder. Add the shortening and milk and mix well. Drop the dough by spoonfuls onto the hot cranberries. Bake at 400F until golden brown. (Wild Plant Cookbook)

**References**
Plants for a Future Database

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