

SALMONBERRY

Latin: *Rubus spectabilis*

CULTURAL USES

For the Quinault and other West Coast nations, fragrant pink salmonberry blooms are an indicator of the return of blueback salmon to local waterways. As the berries ripen, tribal members know that it's time to return to their homelands for the fish harvest.

Salmonberries are found along the coast of Santa Cruz County, throughout the Pacific Northwest, and as far north as Alaska. They're also found further inland, as far east as Idaho and the Washington Plateau.

They prefer moist areas under tree canopy and temperate climates. They can be in riparian zones, coastal areas, clearings, and disturbed areas, but prefer nutrient-rich and moist soils.



CANES

Salmonberry is a shrub reaching heights of 13' and a width of 6-10'. Weak thorns are present on lower stems, while upper stems remain smooth.



LEAVES

Salmonberries are pinnately compound leaves, usually with three leaflets, and are similar to the leaves of a raspberry. The leaflets are light green in color, are pinnately veined, and are slightly rough on the underside.



BERRIES

At the end of February small dark pink flowers 1.5 inch wide bloom. Throughout June you can see both flowers and ripening berries on the bush. Salmonberries are aggregate fruits, similar to blackberries and raspberries. The word "salmonberry" comes from their distinctive color, as they bear an almost uncanny resemblance to salmon eggs. Their berries can be a range of colors from yellow, orange, and occasionally dark purple.



CULINARY USES

Salmonberry may be consumed in a variety of ways and is an important supplement to Indigenous diets that are high in fish and game meat. The ripe fruits are eaten fresh or dried for later and can be made into delicious jams, jellies, and other preserves. The young leaves and shoots are edible raw in salads, steamed and peeled to leave a sweet inner stem, or boiled, and are often dipped in fat or fermented fish eggs ("stink eggs") to be eaten as a nutritious vegetable. "Stink eggs" are a fermented mixture of steelhead or other salmon eggs. When eaten together, the light flavor of the shoots complements the flavor of the fermented eggs, and the oils help prevent constipation from eating too many Salmonberry shoots. Older shoots can still be eaten raw after they have been peeled and as a tasty trail snack.