



Growing Alaska's wild berries

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Growing *Vaccinium vitis-idaea*/*Vaccinium ovalifolium*/*vaccinium uliginosum*/*vaccinium oxycoccos*

Step 1) harvest fresh/ripe berries

Step 2) blend fresh berries in blender with water (1 part berries to 4-5 parts water). Blend on low for 10-20 seconds, then stop and allow mixture to settle (seeds sink and pulp floats). Once settled, pour pulp and about half the water out. Then add fresh water and blend again, settles again, and pour off pulp. Repeat! After 4-5 times, the water will be clear and clean seeds will be at the bottom of the blender!

Step 3) soak seeds in contain overnight in fresh water

Step 4) pour out water and mix seeds in with moist peat moss (moist, but doesn't drip water when you squeeze it). Once evenly mixed, place in a ziplock bag and squeeze out any additional water/air and seal.

Step 5) place bag immediately in the fridge (between 33-40F but not frozen!) and leave for 90+ days

Step 6) after 90+ days, remove baggie from fridge, and spread seed/peat mixture in a thin but even layer over a larger pot full of peat moss.

Step 7) water carefully and place pot under growlights. Within 2.5-4 weeks, you will start to see the first seedlings germinate. Water delicately, and give a very diluted fish emulsion feeding after a few months and the plants have first few true leaves. Transplant as necessary, and harden off prior to planting outside!

Rubus chamaemorus/Rubus spectabilis

Step 1: harvest ripen aqpiq (july 8th this last season in Anchorage)

Step 2: place fresh berries in plastic bag and wheeze out most of the air.

Step 3: leave in fridge for 3-4 weeks. Berries will begin to ferment. The fermentation may assist with wearing down hard outer seed coat (endocarp).

Step 4: remove fermented berries from fridge (august 7th for me) Place in a blender (1 part berries to 4-5 parts fresh water), blend for 10-15 seconds on low. Allow mixture to settle (seeds sink and pulp floats). Pour pulp and about 50% of the water off, then fill back up with fresh water. Blend and repeat. After 4-5 cycles, mostly clean seed will remain and clear water.

Step 5: pour seeds into cup/bowl of water and soak in clean water for 2 days.

Step 6: pour off majority of water and dump clean seeds into a plastic bag and mix in damp sphagnum peat moss (wet enough that it no long drips water when you squeeze it). Then toss the seeds and peat together so the seeds are evenly distributed in the peat moss). Once mixed, squeeze and excess water/air out of the bag.

Step 7: place bag with peat/seeds in a sheltered place at room temperature (out of direct sunlight). This process is called “warm stratification”. I leave them at room temperature until the end of October (2.5-3 months).

Step 8: at the end of warm stratification, place in the crisper drawer of the fridge (cold but not frozen). Leave there (cold stratification) for 90 days minimum.

Step 9: when ready, pull bag from fridge and place back at room temperature. Within 1-2 weeks, you will see the first seeds germinating in the mixture. I pick the germinating ones out, and place the bag back in the fridge for another 3-4 weeks and repeat. You will get a flush of seedlings each time! I got nearly 100% germination in 2022 by may using this method.

Step 10: transplant the seedlings into containers of sphagnum peat moss, place under growlights/sun. Keep well watered! They grow quick and are ready for transplant once hardened off outside!

Note: I use this same method with highbush salmonberries, but they seem to like an additional 30 days of cold (120 days in fridge vs 90 with aqpiq) before I start getting

germination. They also put on flushes of seedlings each time you remove from the fridge!