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Phenophase Photo Guide

Vaccinium angustifolium (Lowbush blueberry)

Why Observe?

Lowbush blueberry is fire-tolerant and rhizomatous, making it a very common colonizer of open ground. Its small (1.5-3.2 cm or 0.6-1.3 inch long) leaves have margins with tiny, regularly spaced serrations. This species provides the leading source of commercial blueberries in North America.

Numerous wildlife including black bears, eastern cottontails, and white-tailed deer browse lowbush blueberry foliage and a wide variety of birds and mammals consume the fruit.



© Shilpa Sen

Tips for Identification

Lowbush blueberry is an erect, low-growing, variable shrub that reaches 5 to 60 cm (2-24 inches) in height. It typically forms dense, extensive colonies. Roots are shallow and fibrous but may possess a taproot, which can extend to 1 m (3.3 feet) in depth. The white, bell-shaped flowers are 0.4-0.8 cm (0.2-0.3 inches) long.

Habitat: Found in alpine and subalpine zones on cliffs, balds and ledges, in grasslands, meadows and fields, on mountain summits and plateaus along ridges or ledges, and in woodlands

Special Consideration:

Lowbush blueberry is known to hybridize with other blueberry species including highbush, velvetleaf, bog, hillside, ground, and downy. This can make definitive identification a challenge.



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Information presented in this guide was compiled from the [USA-NPN](#), [Native Plant Trust's GoBotany](#), and the [FEIS Database](#).



Breaking leaf buds

One or more breaking leaf buds are visible on the plant. A leaf bud is considered "breaking" once a green leaf tip is visible at the end of the bud, but before the first leaf from the bud has unfolded to expose the leaf stalk (petiole) or leaf base.



Leaves

One or more live, unfolded leaves are visible on the plant. A leaf is considered "unfolded" once its entire length has emerged from a breaking bud, stem node or growing stem tip, so that the leaf stalk (petiole) or leaf base is visible at its point of attachment to the stem. Do not include fully dried or dead leaves.



Increasing leaf size

A majority of leaves on the plant have not yet reached their full size and are still growing larger. Do not include new leaves that continue to emerge at the ends of elongating stems throughout the growing season.



Colored leaves

One or more leaves show some of their typical late-season color, or yellow or brown due to drought or other stresses. Do not include small spots of color due to minor leaf damage, or dieback on branches that have broken. Do not include fully dried or dead leaves that remain on the plant.



Flowers or flower buds

One or more fresh open or unopened flowers or flower buds are visible on the plant. Include flower buds or inflorescences that are swelling or expanding, but do not include those that are tightly closed and not actively growing (dormant). Also do not include wilted or dried flowers.



Open flowers

One or more open, fresh flowers are visible on the plant. Flowers are considered "open" when the reproductive parts (male stamens or female pistils) are visible between or within unfolded or open flower parts (petals, floral tubes or sepals). Do not include wilted or dried flowers.



Fruits

One or more fruits are visible on the plant. For *Vaccinium angustifolium*, the fruit is a juicy berry that changes from green to pinkish-green to purplish to deep blue, sometimes with a whitish powdery film.



Ripe fruits

One or more ripe fruits are visible on the plant. For *Vaccinium angustifolium*, a fruit is considered ripe when it has turned deep blue, sometimes with a whitish powdery film.

Phenophases not pictured: Falling leaves, Recent fruit or seed drop *If you are uncertain whether or not a phenophase is occurring, report a "?" for its status until it becomes clear what you are observing after subsequent visits.*