

Nagoonberry, Raspberry — Puyurniq

PUYURNIT PITURNIRTAARTUT. – NAGOONBERRIES ALWAYS TASTE GOOD.



Photo: Pink flowering nagoonberry plant.

Also commonly known as the wild raspberry, or arctic raspberry, the nagoonberry (*Rubus arcticus*) is a low-growing plant that bears a sweet, dark red, segmented, raspberry-like fruit. On Kodiak, Alutiiq people use the same term for nagoonberry and raspberry, illustrating the similarity between this indigenous fruit and the historically introduced red raspberry. Many people consider nagoonberries one of Kodiak's best-tasting wild fruits. Alaska's Russian colonists called the nagoonberry the king of berries for this reason.

Nagoonberries grow in open environments, particularly in damp soils. They thrive in tundra, bogs, meadows, and along stream banks and lakeshores. The plant has crinkled, toothed leaves with three lobes, similar to those of a strawberry plant. Each plant bears a single pink flower that produces one berry. As such, they are not as abundant as other types of berries.

Nagoonberries ripen toward the end of July and are available through August. They separate more easily from their stems when they are ready to be harvested, although some people prefer to harvest them when they are a little underripe and firm. Kodiak Alutiiq people use these plump, juicy berries in many ways. Nagoonberries are eaten fresh, cooked into jams and jellies, and preserved in freezers and jars of oil. People also harvest the young sprouts of this plant, which can be peeled and eaten.