

WORDS THAT DESCRIBE **BLUEBERRIES**

FLAVOR • COLOR • TEXTURE

sweet-sour

tart

juicy

dusty

indigo

plump

soft

purple



dry

bursting

powerful

floral

sharp

matte



GARDEN STATE ON YOUR PLATESM IS A PROJECT OF THE PRINCETON SCHOOL GARDENS COOPERATIVE, PRINCETON PUBLIC SCHOOLS, AND POMPTONIAN FOOD SERVICE, WITH GENEROUS SUPPORT FROM BENT SPOON, WHOLE EARTH CENTER, LILLIPES BAKERY, AND CHURCH & DWIGHT EMPLOYEE GIVING FUND.

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Looking Back

History

Blueberries are native to North America and have been a food source for people for at least 13,000 years. Native Americans foraged for them, eating them fresh in season, then drying and storing the rest for winter. Indigenous Americans also used their roots, stems, leaves, and flowers for medicine. The earliest mention of blueberries by a European comes from Samuel de Champlain, who in 1615 wrote of Algonquin women drying “blues,” which they used with cornmeal in breads.

“Sky-coloured” blueberries make for “a most excellent Summer Dish...They usually eat of them put into a Bason, with Milk, and sweetened a little more with Sugar and Spice...The Indians dry them in the Sun, and sell them to the English by the Bushell, who make use of them instead of Currane [currants], putting of them into Puddens, both boyled and baked, and into Water Gruel.”

~ John Josselyn, “New-Englands Rarities Discovered (1672) and Account of Two Voyages to New-England (1674).”



What's in a Name?

Vaccinium cyanococcus, aka...

Vaccinium refers to a shrub. It comes from a Latin name that may have been derived from an even older Mediterranean language.

Cyanococcus means blue round fruit.

Native Americans called blueberries “star berries” because the blossom end of each berry – the calyx – forms a five-pointed star. The Great Spirit was said to have sent star berries to ease children's hunger.

The Lenape name is wepin. The Ojibwe name is miin. The Dakota name is haza.



Maps, Migration, & Culture

Around the World

For many Native North American tribes, blueberries (and their cousin huckleberries) were important culturally and economically.

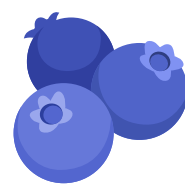
They dried blueberries and added them to soups, stews and meat, and crushed them into a powder to use on meat as a preservative.

When Europeans arrived, they gave them blueberries.

After the 1916 publication of “Directions for Blueberry Culture,” by Dr. Frederick Coville of the USDA, with work from Elizabeth White of New Jersey, commercial blueberry growing exploded.



The blueberry emoji made its debut in 2020.



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**The Spoken Word
Google Translates**

Words for Blueberry

In Old English, berry comes from Old English berie. Blue is estimated at c. 1300, bleu or blwe, meaning sky-colored.

Latin: vaccinia

Arabic: قرزاً توت

Cantonese: 藍莓

French: myrtilles

Haitian Creole: bè ble

Hindi: ब्लूबेरी

Italian: mirtilli

German: blaubeeren

Japanese: ブルーベリー

Persian: هتخا لاغز

Spanish: arándanos azules

Swahili: beri za bluu

Ukrainian: чорниця



Heart & Soul Art & Literature

“The cultivated blueberry was developed in the Pine Barrens...In 1911, Miss Elizabeth White, one of four daughters of a cranberry grower who lived near Chatsworth, read a publication of the USDA in which a Dr. Frederick Coville described the possibilities of crossing various wild blueberries and producing superior offspring. Miss White invited Dr. Coville to use Whitesbog, her family’s property, for his experiments...They eventually made thirty-five thousand hybrid cuttings. Of the resulting bushes, they threw away all but four, from which modern cultivated blueberries, in their numerous varieties, were developed.”

**~ John McPhee,
“The Pine Barrens,” 1967**



James Marion Shull, *Vaccinium corymbosum*, 1872



A Closer Look

Botany

Blueberries (*Vaccinium cyanococcus*) are deciduous perennial shrubs in the Ericaceae (heath) family. Related: cranberry, native to US; bilberry, native to Europe; lingonberry, native to cool latitudes of North America, Europe, and Asia; and huckleberry, native to the mountainous regions of North America, and to the Andes mountains of South America.

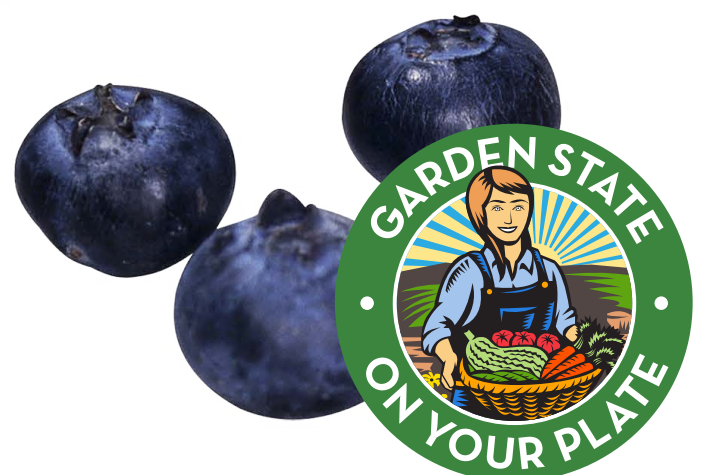
Lowbush blueberries (mostly wild and native to Maine) are around 24 inches tall, with small, intensely flavored berries. Highbush blueberries, the most commonly cultivated, with a sweet-tart flavor, can reach about 13 feet. Rabbiteye blueberries, native to the southeastern US, with a sugary flavor, can reach up to 15 feet tall.



Ripe for the Picking

Season's Best

In New Jersey, blueberry harvest is from mid-June through July. In other months, they are shipped to our supermarkets from elsewhere: Late June-September: Oregon. August: Michigan, Washington, and Maine; September: Washington; later in fall and into winter: Peru and Chile (most on refrigerated container ships); March-May: Mexico, Florida, Georgia and North Carolina; April-June: California.



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Soil & Sun & Water

In the Garden

Coville's discovery in 1911: Blueberries require very acidic soil and produce best in full sun. Plants rely on native bees, bumblebees, honeybees, and butterflies for pollination. Fire is vital in some blueberry habitats, as controlled burns encourage new growth.

In the garden, wait until the dew has evaporated before picking. Look for plump, firm berries with no white, green, or red remaining near the stem. The silvery-white powder coating is natural protection for berries and means they are untouched. Gently loosen berries from the branch with a slight roll of the thumb. Unripe berries won't detach. Take care to leave blooms intact.

Companion/guild plantings: borage, cranberries, sage, lemon balm, strawberries, onions, basil, thyme, bee balm, chives, rhubarb, spinach, basil, parsley, chives, elderberries, lingonberries, lupine

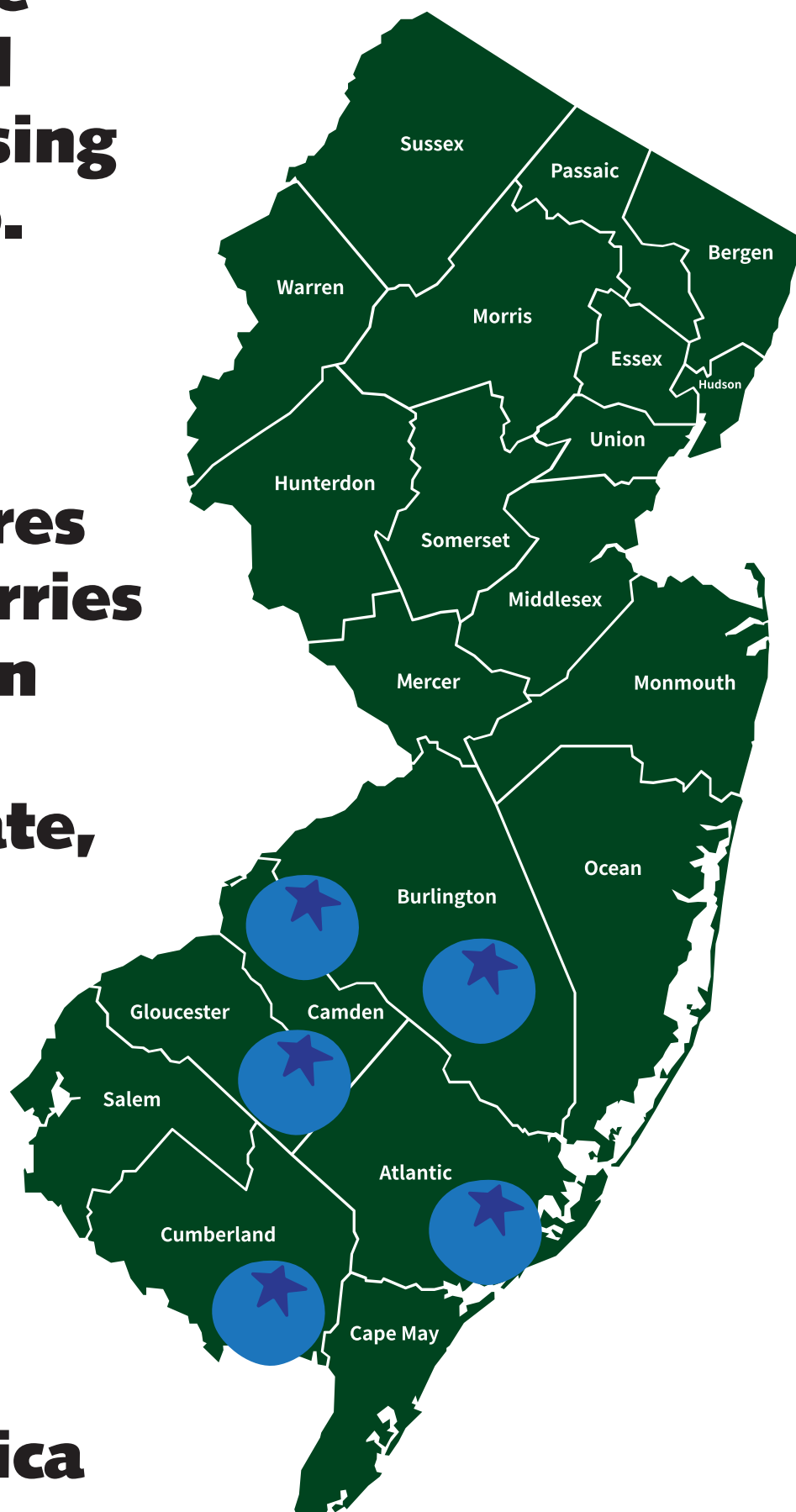


By The Numbers

Math & Money

Blueberries are the state fruit of New Jersey, and are the state's top-grossing and highest-selling crop. The total value of the 2023 blueberry crop in New Jersey was \$92.1 million, with 10,800 acres harvested. Most blueberries in New Jersey are grown on ~254 farms in the southern part of the state, specifically within the Pinelands region and Atlantic County. One town, Hammonton, has been the center of production since the early 1900s.

Worldwide, Latin America accounts for 42% of acreage; China produces about 32% of the berries.



Blueberries &...

Ingredient Pairings

Blueberries pair well with almonds, apricots, bananas, butter, buttermilk, cornmeal, cream, ginger, honey, mangoes, mascarpone, melon, molasses, oats, orange, peaches, pears, pecans, rhubarb, ricotta, strawberries, sugar, walnuts, and yogurt.

FLAVORINGS THAT GO WELL WITH BLUEBERRIES

allspice • cinnamon • cloves • coriander • mace • mint • nutmeg
pepper • vanilla



In the Kitchen

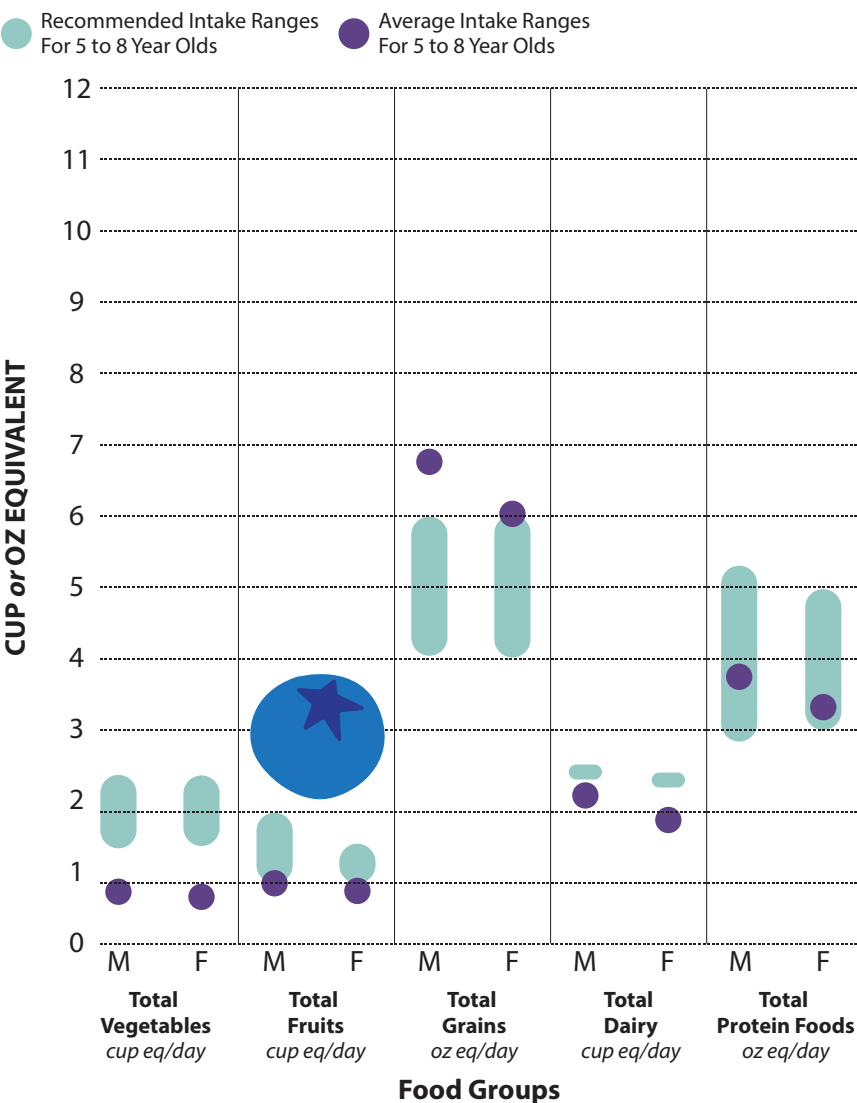
Blueberries have a long culinary history in Native American cuisine – most famously, in pemmican, where it is mixed and pounded with meat and fat. A close second is sautauthig, with a corn porridge base. They are traditionally mashed for the long-simmered wojapi, a Dakota fruit sauce. Mix them into whole-grain dishes, or make a blueberry sauce by cooking them over medium heat until they pop, then cool. Taste-test with a drizzle over anything and everything. Blueberries keep for about a week in the refrigerator; rinse and let air-dry on a clean towel before using in recipes.



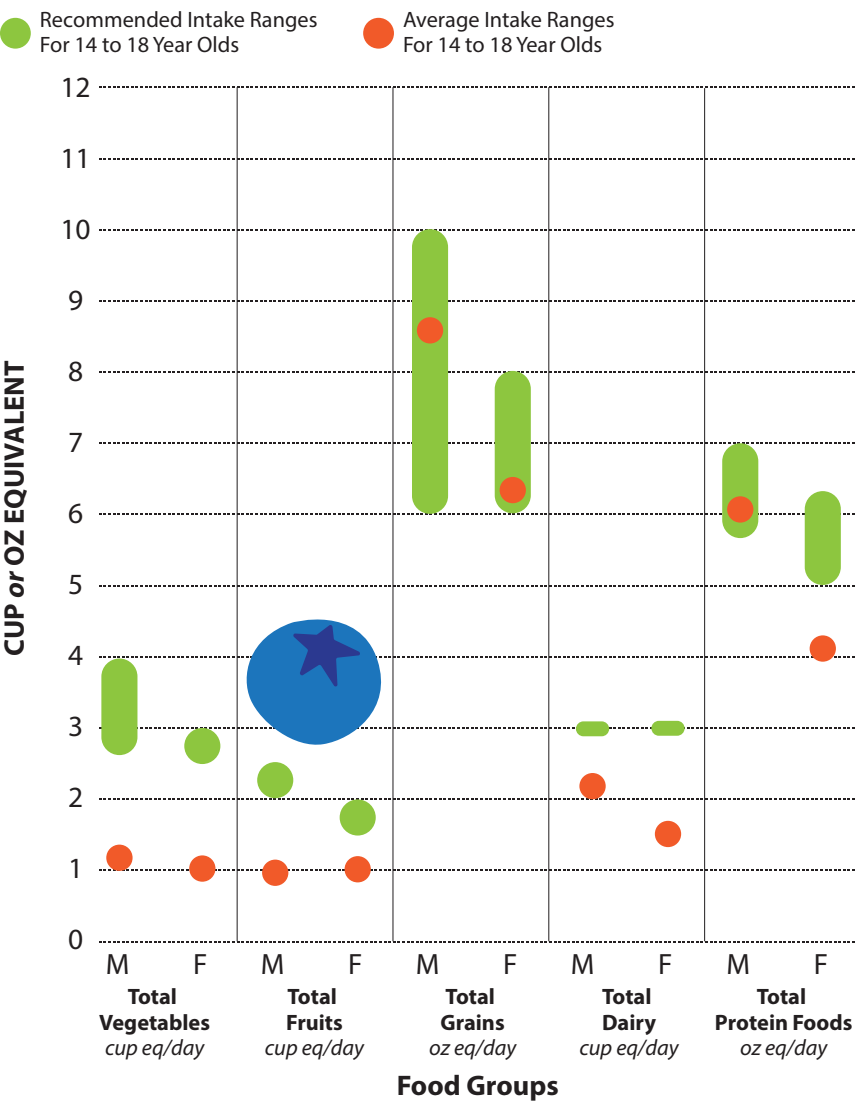
Nutrition for Body & Mind

Fuel for Learning
& Powerful Play

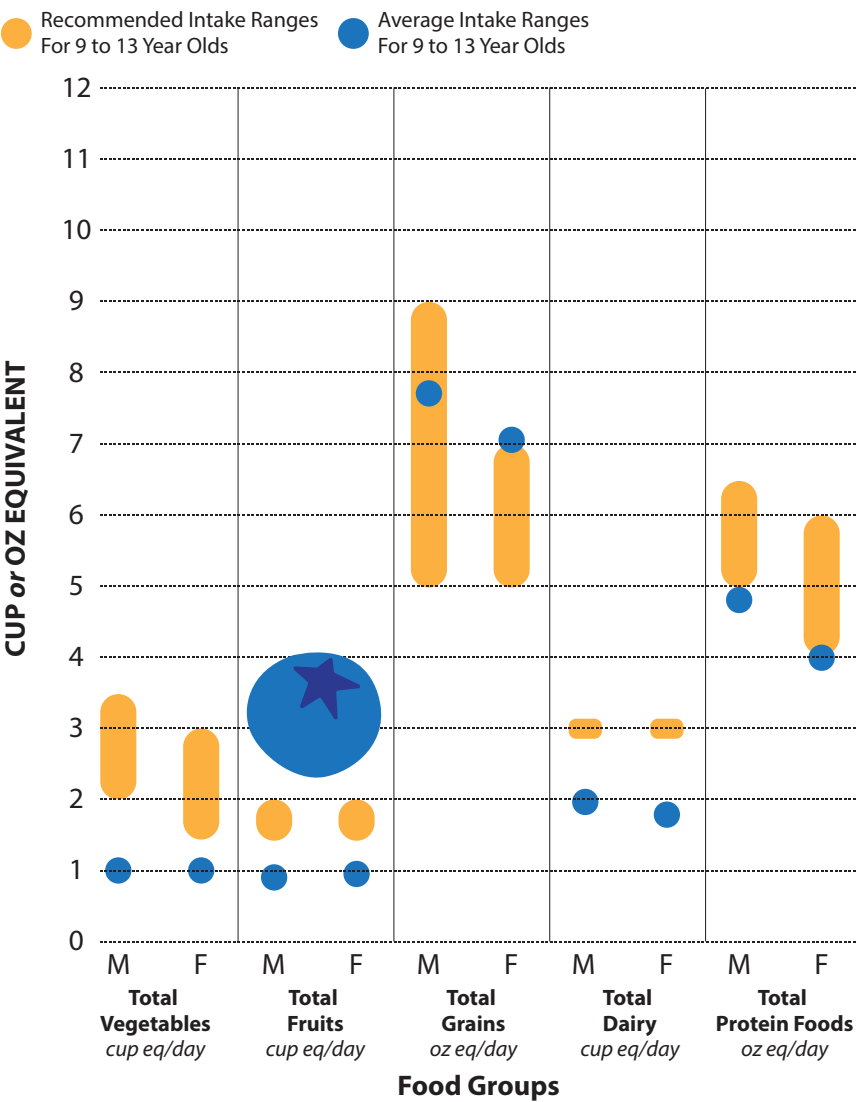
Current Intakes: Ages 5 Through 8



Current Intakes: Ages 14 Through 18



Current Intakes: Ages 9 Through 13



Blueberries are an excellent source of Vitamin K and manganese and fiber, and a good source of Vitamin C. Wild blueberries are even richer in antioxidants, calcium, and fiber than the cultivated versions.



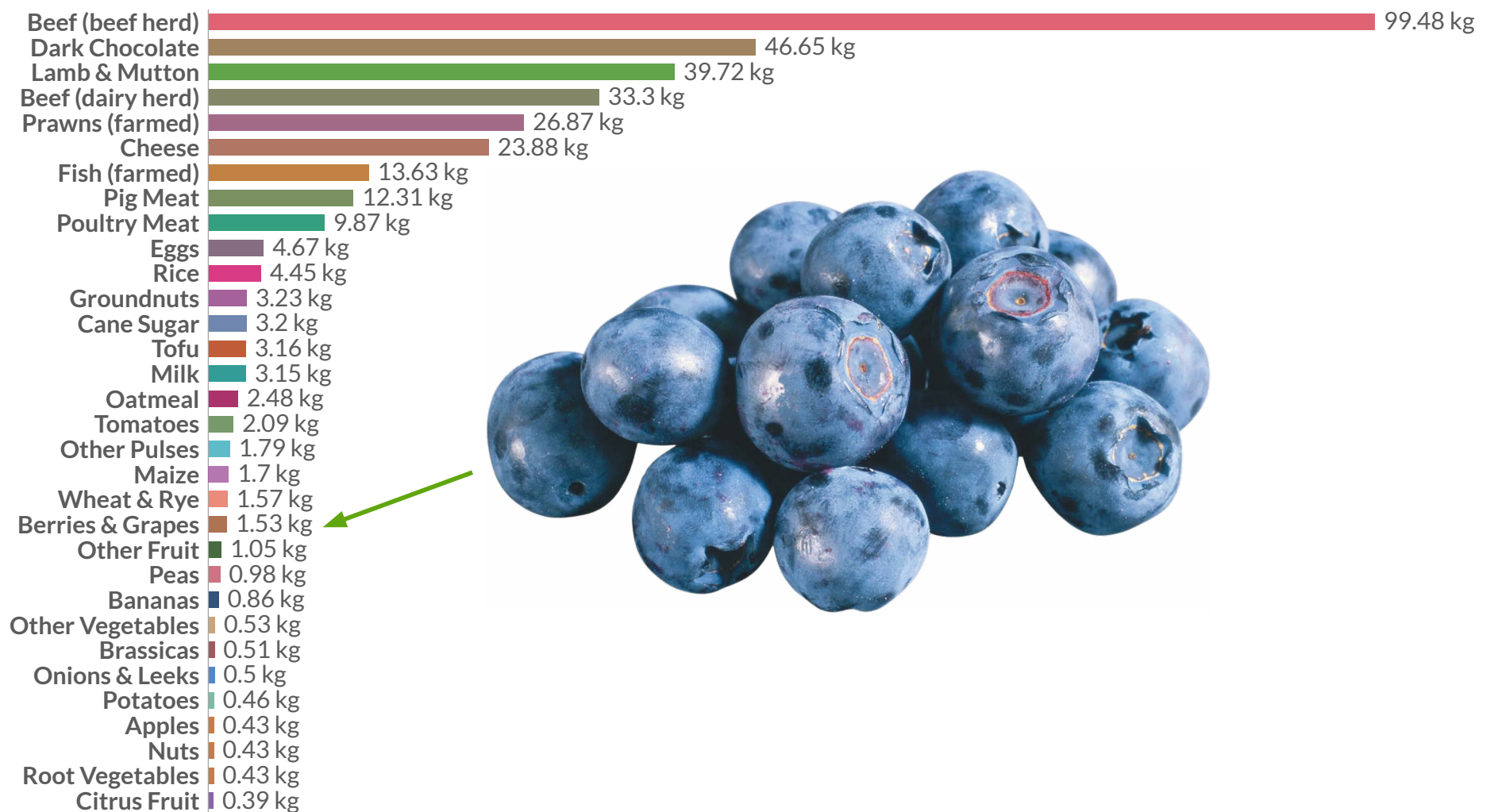
CLIMATE IMPACT OF BLUEBERRIES

ONLY THOSE GROWN LOCALLY AND SEASONALLY

Greenhouse gas emissions per kilogram of food product

Our World
in Data

Greenhouse gas emissions¹ are measured in kilograms of carbon dioxide-equivalents². This means non-CO₂ gases are weighted by the amount of warming they cause over a 100-year timescale.



Data source: Poore and Nemecek (2018)

OurWorldinData.org/environmental-impacts-of-food | CC BY

Climate destabilization is affecting yields of lowbush blueberries along coastal Maine; their cultivated kin stand higher from the soil and can be more easily irrigated. Conventional highbush blueberry fields typically are sprayed with pesticides and herbicides to control insects, fungi, and weeds. Even wild varieties aren't necessarily pesticide-free. When possible, buy from smaller farms, choose organic varieties in season – or grow your own.

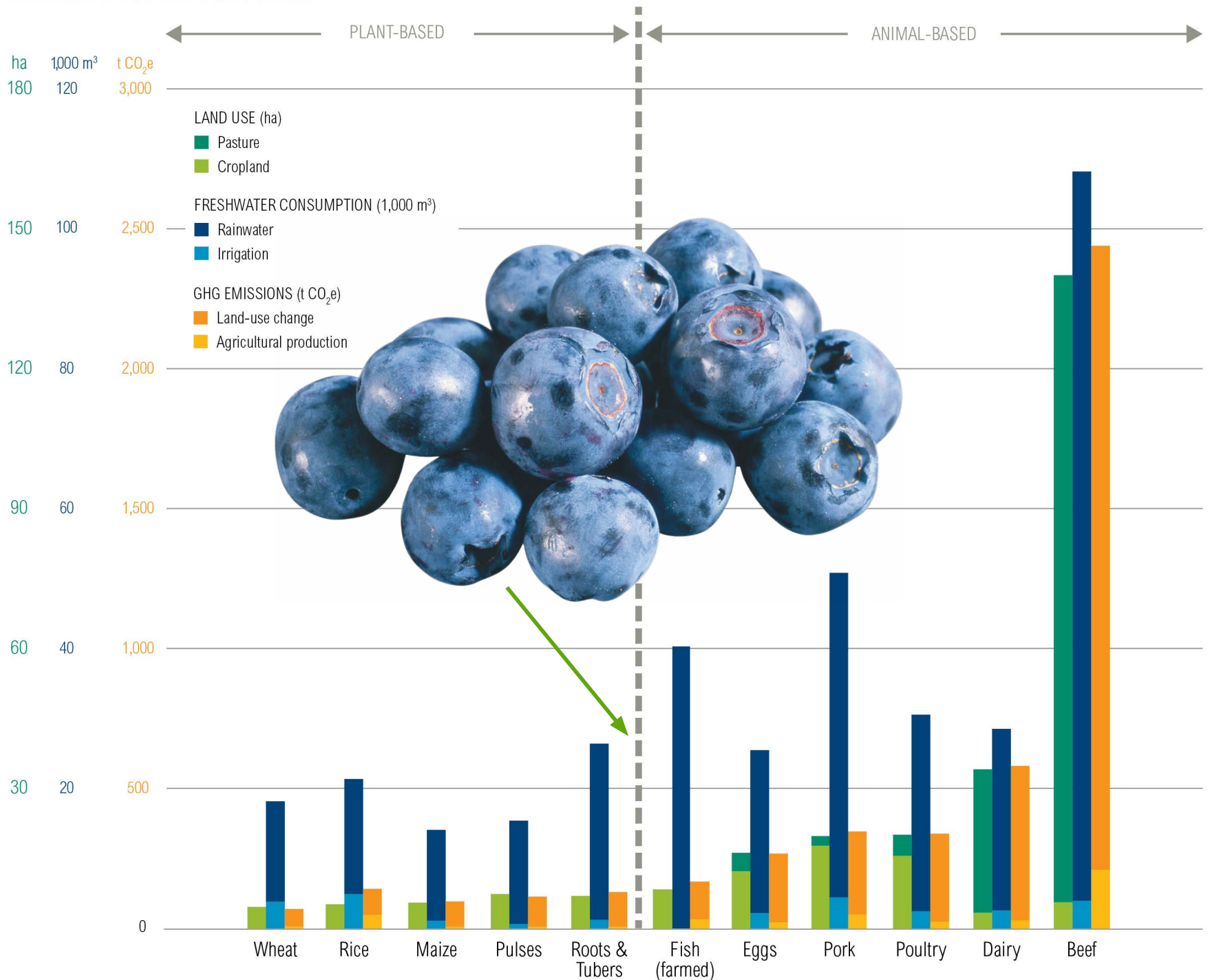


RESOURCE INTENSITY OF BLUEBERRIES

ONLY THOSE GROWN LOCALLY AND SEASONALLY

Animal-Based Foods Are More Resource-Intensive than Plant-Based Foods

PER TON PROTEIN CONSUMED



wri.org/shiftingdiets

WORLD RESOURCES INSTITUTE

The greatest emissions are caused by the conversion of land, the continued use of that land rather than reforestation, by processes on the farm, by refrigerated transport and by plastic packaging. When possible, choose foods in season, and from smaller farms.



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<https://www.wri.org/data/animal-based-foods-are-more-resource-intensive-plant-based-foods>

Garden State on Your Plate

Blueberries

Tasting

If possible, pick blueberries from bushes, and buy samples from nearby supermarkets and/or farmers' markets. Rinse thoroughly and allow to dry. Taste raw, noting aroma, color, tenderness of skin, depth of color, and crunch. Sip water and take a bit of plain cracker between tasting each variety.

In small bowls, mash a few of each variety with a fork. Try various flavorings: balsamic vinegar, a few grains of salt, a whisper of lemon zest, a drop of vanilla, a smidgen of vinaigrette, a crumble of goat cheese.

This seasoning mix can be used to bathe produce before roasting, as a seasoning for braising or simmering, and for dressing salads of fresh greens.

Use a $\frac{1}{3}$ to $\frac{2}{3}$ ratio, acid to oil.

Vinaigrette

$\frac{1}{3}$ cup lemon juice

$\frac{2}{3}$ cup olive oil

1 garlic clove, crushed

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon dijon mustard

Salt

Pepper

Place ingredients in a jar with a tight-fitting lid.

Shake to combine.

Store in refrigerator.

Photo by Dilara from Pexels



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Credits

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Garden State on Your Plate is a K12 program that uses local produce, school cafeterias, campus lands, and student demographics to illustrate and amplify curriculum. The program, designed to elevate the everyday quality of school foods and to increase participation in the National School Lunch Program, was created in 2010 by the Princeton School Gardens Cooperative in partnership with Princeton Public Schools, and with funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

