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Arctostaphylos alpina

[Synonyms : *Arbutus alpina*, *Arctous alpinus*, *Mairania alpina*]

MOUNTAIN BEARBERRY is a deciduous shrub. Native to continents around the North Pole (circumpolar) including Britain, it has tiny pink-flushed, white flowers and leaves that turn red in Autumn.

It is also known as *Alpen-Bärentraube* (German), Alpine bearberry, Black bearberry, Ptarmigan-berry, *Riekonmarja* (Finnish), and *Ripbär* (Swedish).

Alpina means ‘alpine’ ie. found above the tree line.

The tiny black berries are less dry than those of some of its close relatives and they are eaten in Lapland and some parts of Russia.

The juicy berries when added to others were eaten fresh by the Alaskan Inuit tribes, and the North American Koyukon Indians stored them in oil for Winter when they added them to meat or fish dishes.

The leaves played a role in some of the North American Chippewa tribe’s ritual and the tribe’s elders also smoked the leaves

Records show that some of the Chippewa used mountain bearberry medicinally to treat rheumatism and other ailments.