

Rubus occidentalis

[Synonyms : *Melanobatus occidentalis*, *Rubus idaeus* var. *americanus*, *Rubus occidentalis* var. *pallidus*]

BLACK RASPBERRY is a prickly deciduous shrub. Native to eastern North America it has small white flowers.

It is also known as *Aghamugi* (Omaha and Ponca North American Indian), *Amerikkalainen sinivattu* (Finnish), *Aparu* (Pawnee North American Indian), Black cap, *Ostružina* (Slovak), *Ostružinik ojíněný* (Czech), Purple raspberry, Scotch cap, *Takahecha* (Dakota and Ponca North American Indian), Thimbleberry, Virginian raspberry, and Wild raspberry.

Occidentalis means ‘western (especially North American)’.

North American Indian tribes including the Omaha, Chippewa Cherokee, Ponca, Dakota, Meskwaki, Pawnee and Menominee ate the purplish-black fruit. Cherokee Indians used them to make pies and preserves but from records it was the Iroquois who may have been the most adventurous as they harvested black raspberries for making soups and sauces, a porridge, bread and puddings. The fruit were also stored in various ways (mainly for Winter food) by the Meskwaki, Ponca, Chippewa, Omaha, Dakota, Pawnee and Cherokee tribes – and the Iroquois also kept the fruit in little dried cakes and these were often carried by their hunters as provisions while stalking. The Thompson Indian tribe ate the young shoots. Several tribes including the Pawnee, Ponca, Dakota and Omaha also made a tea with the leaves, while the Meskwaki made it with root bark.

This shrub was the source of medicine for several North American Indian tribes. Some like the Omaha used the root to treat bowel disorders in children – while the Cherokee cured adults similarly afflicted with a leaf decoction. Both the Cherokee and Iroquois Indians used the shrub to cause vomiting when this was required, and they also prescribed it as a purgative. Some female problems were treated with it by the Chippewa and Cherokee tribes, and the latter also used it during childbirth. For the Chippewa Indians it provided a remedy for back pain, and for sore eyes. While the Iroquois relied upon it for treating liver ailments, diarrhoea, whooping-cough in children and venereal disease, and the Cherokee tribe could be prescribed it as a cure for coughs, rheumatism, skin disorders and toothache. The latter also took it as a tonic – and Menominee Indians used it to treat tuberculosis.

The fruit have been made into wines, cordials and syrups. They have been/are also eaten raw, and made into preserves, jams and pies.

Medicinally, herbalists have used the roots to treat dysentery.