



Six Berry-Producing Superstars for Wildlife

by RUTHANNE JOHNSON

Humans aren't the only ones who covet nature's sweet treats. Berries are a favorite—and oftentimes critical—food source for many birds, mammals, and even some reptiles (think box turtles).

But not all berries are created equal, says University of Delaware ecologist Doug Tallamy. Fruits from nonnative varieties, like the autumn olive and exotic bush honeysuckle, often provide little more than sugar. "The birds love them, just like we love pure sugar," says Tallamy. "But when that's all you get, it's not so great."

Most native berries, on the other hand, are rich in fats and protein. Just as important, native plants provide additional nourishment in the form of insects, which have evolved to eat them. "[Insects] are the little protein factories that transfer energy from the plants to almost everything else," Tallamy says. In places where nonnatives prevail, he adds, birds and other animals may enjoy sugary snacks for a few weeks, but "for the rest of the time . . . they have nothing."

So before you start digging, look for native plants that appeal to the animals you want to attract. Include some evergreens for year-round shelter and multilayered vegetation to support a diversity of wildlife. Remember to locate plants away from busy roads and choose pet-safe species. A local native plant society or university cooperative extension can provide suggestions and cost-saving tips.

To help you get started, here are some superstar plants renowned for their benefits to wildlife.

1. Juniper Tree

With more than 15 species native to North America, these evergreens vary from tall trees to low-growing shrubs. Junipers can live more than 400 years. Their hard leathery fruits (fleshy cones with merged scales) turn blue or red, depending on species, when they mature in the fall.

► **WHY IT'S A SUPERSTAR:** Dense greenery provides vital winter roosting and spring nesting sites, while older trees offer cavities as shelter. Mammals and birds are fond of the carbohydrate- and fat-rich berries. In winter, Townsend's solitaires and robins may consume more than 200 juniper berries per day. "Native junipers in the Rockies are one of the most reliable winter berry plants," says Salida, Colo., ecologist Susan Tweit. But steer clear of the nonnative varieties frequently used in landscaping, she warns, because they are often bred not to produce berries.



2. Serviceberry Tree

The *Amelanchier* genus includes around 20 native species of cold- and drought-tolerant deciduous shrubs and small trees, several of which are also known as shadbush. Pink buds transform to white flowers in early spring, changing to clusters of multicolored berries that ripen in June, hence another common nickname, Juneberry.

► **WHY IT'S A SUPERSTAR:** After winter's lean months, serviceberries provide an early food source for pollinators and at least 40 bird species, with a variety of mammals browsing the stems, leaves, and berries. *Amelanchier* tops the list of native wildlife attractants on Tallamy's 10-acre property in Oxford, Penn. "It's the earliest fruiting tree that I know of," he says. "The deer love it. The berries almost never hit the ground because the birds get them . . . catbirds, robins, cedar waxwings, cardinals—just about anything that's around."



3. Viburnum Bush

The *Viburnum* genus includes more than a dozen native species, ranging from 3 to 30 feet tall and yielding fragrant clusters of white, cream, or pink flowers. Berries may persist through winter. Some species, such as the American cranberry bush and arrowwood viburnum, are more fruitful than others. (Note that most viburnums require another individual growing nearby to yield berries.)

► **WHY IT'S A SUPERSTAR:** Protein- and fat-rich berries are savored by deer, beavers, rabbits, chipmunks, squirrels, mice, skunks, grouse, turkeys, and most songbirds. Deer and beavers browse the twigs, bark, and leaves. On her Williamsburg, Mass., property, Carol Duke has seen pileated woodpeckers clinging to the tiny branches of viburnum trees and plucking berries from the large, droopy clusters. "The flowers are a big attraction for every kind of insect—butterflies and bees. And I've got every kind of bird," she says.

4. Common Hackberry Tree

This deciduous tree can grow more than 100 feet tall and live 200 years. Small green blossoms in spring yield to purple berries in the fall, which persist through winter.

► **WHY IT'S A SUPERSTAR:** Hardy trees that can withstand varied light and soil conditions, common hackberries

Because birds raise their young on insects, native berry producers that attract insects are best.



are often found in urban environments. Small mammals, songbirds, and ground-nesting birds—including wild turkeys, grouse, and quail—savor their nutritious berries. The trees are a vital host for *Asterocampa* butterflies and 40 moth species, says Tallamy.

5. Virginia Creeper Vine

This drought-tolerant, deciduous woody vine can grow more than 50 feet long. From June to August, tiny clusters of greenish-white flowers appear. Berries ripen in late summer and drop from September to February. (Note that berries are toxic to people and small pets.)

► **WHY IT'S A SUPERSTAR:** Many migrating birds and small mammals, including mice, skunks, chipmunks, and squirrels, feast on this fall berry-maker's bluish-black fruit. Deer will munch on the leaves and stems, while voluminous foliage provides spring nesting sites for birds and nesting material for leaf-cutting bees. A close relative of native grapevines, Virginia creeper is also an important host plant for dozens of moth species.



6. Black Cherry Tree

From March to June, this fast-growing deciduous tree sports white blossoms that attract a variety of pollinators. Fleshy, dark purple berries appear from June to October. Other wildlife-beneficial *Prunus* species include the western chokecherry, American wild plum, and eastern and western sandcherry. (Note that wilted leaves, twigs, and seeds are toxic to cows and other animals if consumed in large quantities.)

► **WHY IT'S A SUPERSTAR:** Black cherry trees, which can reach 90 feet tall, host more than 450 species of butterflies and moths and some 70 bird species. Bears, deer, foxes, and many small mammals also feast on the antioxidant-rich fruit. While transforming a half block of reclaimed industrial property into a wildlife haven, Tweit planted chokecherries near the creek. "I've seen orioles on them. Hummingbirds will hover around the flowers and pick insects off them. ... Everything from aphids to native bees will nectar at them," she says. "... They get totally chowed by the end of the fall."



□ **ON THE iPad:** Read about six more superstar plants for wildlife.



Running on Plenty

There was a time when vegan ultramarathoner Scott Jurek—the man who won the 100-mile Western States Endurance Run a record seven straight times—hated running. Almost as much as he once hated vegetables.

“I’m a Minnesota boy originally from the backwoods. I’ve hunted and fished for a good chunk of my life,” Jurek says. But it was his even-

tual love for running and vegetables that the athlete credits with transforming his life. And they’re the inspiration for his book *Eat & Run*—an uplifting story about a man who pushes himself to his limits and finds freedom and strength on the other side.

In the infamous Badwater Ultramarathon, Jurek ran 135 miles

nonstop from Death Valley to Mount Whitney, Calif., in 115-degree heat. It was a grueling experience, but one that also brought moments of presence and peace—moments, he writes in his book, “that I have learned to live for, to love ... when to go on seems futile, and when a small act of kindness, another step, a sip of water, can make you realize that *nothing* is futile, that going on—especially when going on seems so foolish—is the most meaningful thing in the world.”

Jurek only saw his running performance improve once he began eating more plant foods. For weekend joggers and aspiring ultrarunners alike, he recommends a gradual transition. “Try one new food per week ... or eat plant-based for a day once a week. ... It’s probably going to affect [your performance] in a positive way, much like it has mine.”

Warm up post-run with a batch of Jurek’s Minnesota winter chili.

—Katie Carrus

Minnesota Winter Chili SERVES 8-10

INGREDIENTS

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| 2 tablespoons coconut oil or olive oil | ½ cup carrots, finely chopped | 2 tablespoons chili powder | 1 16-ounce can black beans, drained |
| 2 garlic cloves, minced | 1 jalapeno pepper or other hot pepper, seeded and minced (optional) | 2 teaspoons sea salt, plus more to taste | 1 16-ounce can red beans, drained |
| 1 cup onion, finely chopped | 2 cups frozen corn kernels | ½ teaspoon black pepper | 1½ cups water |
| 8-10 medium mushrooms, finely chopped | 1 teaspoon ground cumin | 1 28-ounce can diced tomatoes | ½ cup dry bulgur wheat |
| ½ cup green bell pepper, finely chopped | ½ teaspoon ground coriander | 1 14-ounce can tomato puree | Hot sauce or cayenne pepper (optional) |
| ½ cup red bell pepper, finely chopped | | 1 16-ounce can kidney beans, drained | ¼ cup minced fresh cilantro, for garnish |

1. Add oil to a large pot and saute the vegetables and spices over medium to medium-low heat for 10 minutes or until tender. (Add a few tablespoons of water if the veggies begin sticking.)

2. Add the remaining ingredients, except the cilantro, and simmer over medium-low heat, covered, for 30 minutes. Stir and simmer for an additional 20–30 minutes until the veggies are cooked.

3. Season with salt and, if desired, hot sauce or cayenne pepper to taste. Sprinkle with cilantro and serve. (Leftover chili freezes well.)

➤ **READ** an interview with Scott Jurek at humaneociety.org/allanimals. To receive a free weekly Meatless Monday text with a link to a mobile-friendly recipe, text TASTY to 30644.

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JILL RAPPAPORT

For 16 years, Jill Rappaport attended A-list events and interviewed top celebrities for NBC's *Today* show. But then her beloved dog was diagnosed with bone cancer in 2006, and viewers from around the world responded to the story of Jack's leg amputation and chemotherapy. The entertainment correspondent said to her executive producer: "Stars don't need my help; animals do. I want to be the animal advocate for this show."



Rappaport has since earned numerous accolades, including two HSUS Genesis Awards, for shining a spotlight on animal issues. Off-screen, she shares her home with five rescue dogs and seven horses, and she works to ensure that her friends never want for furry companionship: Bryant Gumbel, Christie Brinkley, and Al Roker have her to thank for bringing rescue dogs into their lives.

In this edited interview with senior editor Julie Falconer, Rappaport describes her mission to get needy animals into loving homes.

What motivated you to launch the Rescued

Me collection of pet collars and leashes? I just found that people who end up rescuing are so proud of it—and they should be! The leashes and collars have messages like "Opt to Adopt," "I'm a Pound Hound," or "Smitten by My Rescue Kitten." It gives people bragging rights and sends the message that adoption is what you should be doing. And I'm working with two very important organizations, The HSUS and Tails of Hope.

What's the secret to the success of your From Bow to Wow adoption segment on the *Today* show? By putting a spin on it, making it a makeover segment, we kind of put a new face on adoption. Our first time doing this segment, we took four to five animals from a New York City shelter. I pulled two 10-year-old wheaten terriers who had to stay together. My producer said, "Are you sure? It's going to be hard to get them adopted." And I said, "If we just bring out yellow Lab puppies, we're not doing the important service here." I've had three-legged animals and blind cats [on the air]—every single one has been adopted over the past four years.

How do viewers respond to animal stories? We could do the hottest celebrity, the biggest story of the day politically, or some fashion piece or diet story, and it's still the animal stories that rule. They're the ones that resonate with people's hearts. I think one of the most important series I did was about 177 racehorses that were being starved to death in upstate New York. After we aired that story, we were able to save about 98 percent of them.

Every story I do, I feel like I've taken a few steps forward, but there are thousands and thousands of miles to go. However, if every one of those people I get my message out to takes a few baby steps forward, just think of the miles we can cover together.



SHOPPING CART

In the recently launched

Facebook game Joy Kingdom, players join forces with each other and Amani, king of the animal spirits, to chase away shadows and restore joy to the animals. While having fun, players also get opportunities to help real-life creatures in need. Players earn currency called "joy," which they can donate to



animal welfare organizations, including The HSUS, while "daily rewards" result in food donations to local shelters. Joy Kingdom is the brainchild of Sojo Studios, the company behind the successful WeTopia game benefiting children's charities. With celebrities Ellen DeGeneres and Justin Bieber promoting the company's latest philanthropic-driven online game, Joy Kingdom is sure to spread cheer to animals and animal lovers everywhere. Enter the happy domain at apps.facebook.com/joykingdom.



BOOK SHELF

A refugee from a

New York City slaughter market, Albie arrived with mouth sores and a maggot-infested leg wound. Brandy was rescued from a dumpster as a male chick, cast off by an egg farm that had no need for him. Quincy was found abandoned in a park, likely a child's unwanted Easter gift.

Jenny Brown, cofounder of Woodstock Farm Animal Sanctuary in New York, recounts these stories and more in her memoir, *The Lucky Ones: My Passionate Fight for Farm Animals*. Interspersed with recollections of Brown's journey from childhood cancer survivor to animal advocate, the happy endings of sanctuary residents will inspire readers, whether it's Albie gaining global fame as a prosthesis-wearing goat, Brandy the people-loving rooster jumping into visitors' laps, or Quincy finding a wing-flapping protector in fellow duck Teddy.



ON THE iPad: Read an excerpt from *The Lucky Ones*.

READ the full interview at humanesociety.org/allanimals.