

Gaylussacia baccata (Wangenh.) K. Koch

black huckleberry

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Synonym. *Gaylussacia resinosa* (Ait.) Torr. & Gray.

Other common names. highbush huckleberry, black-snap, huckleberry.

Growth habit, occurrence, and use. Black huckleberryC*Gaylussacia baccata* (Wangh.) K. KochCis a small deciduous shrub found from Louisiana east to Florida and north to Maine, Iowa, and Manitoba. It is upright and highly branched and reaches heights of 0.3 to 1.2 m at maturity (Vines 1960). The berries are an important game food (Van Dersal 1938) and are sometimes eaten by humans. The shrub was cultivated as early as 1772 (Bonner and Halls 1974).

Flowering and fruiting. The small, perfect, pinkish flowers appear in May to June, and the berrylike, drupaceous fruits mature in July to September. They are dark reddish to purple when immature and black when mature. Fruits are 6 to 10 mm long and contain 10 one-seeded, bone-colored nutlets that are 1.5 to 2.0 mm in length (Radford and others 1968; Vines 1960) (figures 1 and 2).

Collection, extraction, and storage. Black huckleberry fruits (Aberries®) may be stripped from the branches by hand or with blueberry rakes any time after they thoroughly ripen. They often persist for several weeks. Seeds may be extracted by macerating the fruits in water and allowing the pulp and empty seeds to float away. Some samples have been reported to have less than 50% filled seeds. Seed yields of 30 g of cleaned seeds/kg (2 oz/lb) of fruits have been reported (4 samples), with an average of 780 cleaned seeds/g (22,100/oz) (Bonner and Halls 1974). No seed storage studies have been reported with this species, but the seeds appear to be orthodox in storage behavior. This assumption is supported by a report that seeds stored in sealed bottles at 5 °C for over 2 years did not lose viability (Bonner and Halls 1974).

Germination. Black huckleberry seeds are dormant and require treatment for good germination. In one test, samples from a 2-year-old seedlot were subjected first to warm stratification in moist peat at diurnally alternating temperatures of 20 to 30 °C for 30 days. Then the temperature was lowered to 10 °C, and 80% of the seeds germinated after 27 days and 96% after 47 days (Bonner and Halls 1974). Germination is epigeal (figure 3).

References

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- Vines RA. 1960. Trees, shrubs, and woody vines of the Southwest. Austin: University of Texas Press. 1104 p.

Figure 1C *Gaylussacia baccata*, black huckleberry: exterior view of seed in 2 planes, × 24.

Figure 2C *Gaylussacia baccata*, black huckleberry: longitudinal section through a seed, × 25.

Figure 3C *Gaylussacia baccata*, black huckleberry: seedling development at 3 and 9 days.