

# Growing Saskatoon Berries



The Saskatoon (*Amelanchier alnifolia*), were used extensively by the Native Americans, and was a major source of food for early settlers. They are still very popular in Western Canada and are delicious eaten fresh, cooked in pies or jams and in other desserts. They can also be canned or frozen, or used to make delicious wines.

The saskatoon is a very hardy shrub or small tree with a mature height of 3-4m. The saskatoon is very adaptable and will grow on a wide range of soils except for those that are poorly drained or heavy clay lacking in humus. Saskatoons also make attractive ornamental shrubs or natural hedges with their masses of white flowers in early spring. Those are followed by clusters of blue-purple fruit in mid-summer and gold and orange fall foliage. The fruit are also highly prized and readily devoured by birds.

Saskatoon plants have rarely been available in Eastern Canada, but are now regularly available at most Garden Centres. Saskatoons grow best in sunny locations and will make an attractive hedgerow if planted from one and a half to two metres apart. If you want to keep the plants separate, they should be planted at least three metres apart. Saskatoons begin to bear fruit when they are two to four years old. The fruit is produced on the previous year's growth and on older branches. The bushes can be pruned after flowering or after the fruit is ripe. If the bushes are pruned regularly, they can be readily maintained at two metres which makes it very easy to pick the fruit. If you don't want the birds to devour the fruit, it is best to cover the bushes with garden netting just as the fruit begins to turn colour. The fruit ripens evenly and the whole crop can usually be picked at one time. Fruit that is barely ripe has higher vitamin C content and jells more readily than mature fruit. This type is best for freezing or preserving. Fully ripe fruit has a higher sugar content and is better for wine making.

## Recipes for Home-grown Saskatoons

### Saskatoon Slump

**Mix together and spread in an 8 inch baking dish:**

4 cups of Saskatoon, sorted and washed  
1 cup sugar  
½ tsp. Ground ginger

**In a mixing bowl, combine:**

1 cup flour  
½ tsp. Salt  
1 ½ tsp baking powder  
¼ cup sugar  
¾ cup milk  
¼ cup melted butter

**Pour batter over fruit and bake at 350F for 45 minutes**

### Saskatoon Fool

Combine 2 cups Saskatoons with 3 tablespoons water, ½ cup sugar and 1 teaspoon lemon juice and stew until tender. Press through a coarse sieve.

Beat 1 cup whipping cream until stiff. Fold puree carefully into cream, spoon into 4 individual serving dishes, chill and serve.