

# Aronia berry, black chokeberry (*Aronia melanocarpa*)



**Exposure:** Full sun to part shade, zone 3 - 7.

**Soil:** A native species in the Southern Appalachians, often found growing with wild blueberries in high elevation balds. Good for any garden soil. Also does well in wetland situations or poorly drained soil.

**Growth habits:** Very attractive deciduous shrubs from 4 - 7 feet tall, depending on variety. Glossy dark green summer foliage followed by bright red fall color. Beautiful clusters of white flowers in the spring followed by large blue-black fruit clusters in late summer to early fall. Self-pollinating.

**Landscape uses:** Orchard production of the very nutritious berries. Useful in home landscapes for hedging and foundation plantings. Great wetland margin or rain garden plant. Nectar/pollen source for beneficial insects and bees.

**Edible/Medicinal properties:** The blue-black berries are borne in great abundance on plants from an early age. The berries are very popular in Europe for healthy juice production and, due to their high pectin content, also make very tasty and nutritious jams. The berries are extremely rich in antioxidants and anthocyanins.

## Caring for your aronia berry plants

**Pruning:** In the late winter when the heavy freezes are over, prune away any damaged or diseased limbs, and crossing branches. When the plant is actively growing, pinch the tips for a fuller plant. In the summer, after fruiting, you can also prune to shape the plant. The UPN videos on pruning blueberry shrubs and pinch pruning also apply to pruning Aronia berry shrubs.

**Watering:** The aronia berry plant will likely need to be watered once a week if there isn't enough rain.

**Fertilization:** Apply a good general purpose fertilizer in April and June.

## Frequently asked questions about aronia berries

What's that white fuzzy stuff on the leaves?

Aronia berries are susceptible to downy mildew. You can either let it be, knowing that it will disappear when the weather is drier, or spray with Organocide, an OMRI-approved fungicide.

What are the berries like?

The berries are the size of blueberries, with thin skins and small seeds, so you can eat the whole thing. The taste is hard to describe -- it is neither sweet nor tart, but has an earthy taste.

## Additional information

See the Useful Plants Nursery website at [www.usefulplants.org](http://www.usefulplants.org) for videos demonstrating planting and other plant care techniques.