

Amelanchier alnifolia

Common names: Western or Pacific serviceberry, shadberry, sarvisberry, Saskatoon berry, juneberry

Rose Family. This shrub is common on Moscow Mountain and on the Palouse in moister areas with shrubs. It is found throughout much of Idaho and the Pacific Northwest. It is a deciduous shrub/tree; the grayish-green leaves are generally oval in shape about 1 ½ to 2" long and 1" wide. They are toothed at the top of the leaf and smooth-edged at the base of the leaf. Flowers are pure white, in clusters, and are followed by purplish-black fruit which may be ¼" to ½" in size. There are 5 strap-shaped petals. The wood is hard and was used by Native Americans for many purposes.



Variations: It is closely related to other *Amelanchier* varieties such as *Amelanchier canadensis*, *arborea* and *laevis*.

Use in the landscape: It is very good as a medium-sized shrub or small multi-stemmed tree in the garden. Its early pure white blooms appear first among the Palouse area shrubs; its fruit is the fruit of choice for many birds of the Palouse – flickers, cedar waxwings, robins, towhees, downy and hairy woodpeckers, among others – both when fresh and when dried on the tree. In addition its grayish leaves add variety to the green landscape, and it often shows good golden fall color. The accompanying picture was taken on the Grande Ronde River on April 1. Serviceberries are generally in bloom by mid-April on Moscow Mountain. It can be grown in partial to full sun. It will sucker and form a multi-stemmed shrub naturally unless pruned into more of a tree shape.

Availability: Plants are available from some nurseries. Be sure to ask for the native variety as most of the ornamentals are mid-west or eastern varieties. In addition those who have it in their garden may have seedlings to share.

Pests: Twigs are probably browsed by deer or moose, but I have not seen significant damage. We sometimes see small galls on the leaves. The fruit is a welcome addition to the diet of many animals and birds so you will definitely have competition for the fruit.

Edibility: The purplish-black fruit (small pomes) are very tasty in moist years although they can be fairly dry if there has not been significant spring moisture. They can be eaten fresh off the bush, cooked in a pie, made into jelly or syrup, and dried as raisins. Serviceberries were a staple of the Native American diet and were included in pemmican. Native Americans also made tonics for various purposes – after childbirth and stomach upsets. See the web for more food and medicinal uses by Native Americans.

Propagation: Propagation may be by seed after cold stratification, or small seedlings may be transplanted.

Native Plants should not be dug from the wild. Please purchase from reputable dealers.

Numerous sites about *Amelanchier alnifolia* can be found on the web by typing the plant name in a search engine such as Google. It is also written up in many western plant guides.

See H. D Harrington, [Edible Plants of the Rocky Mountains](#); Frederick D. Johnson, [Wild Trees of Idaho](#); Arthur R. Kruckeberg, [Gardening with Native Plants of the Pacific Northwest](#); all have additional information.