

***Vaccinium myrtilloides* Michx.**

velvet-leaved blueberry  
Ericaceae ( Heath Family)

**Status:** State Sensitive

**Rank:** G5S1

**General Description:** From Barnes and Wagner (1981): Low, upright shrub, to 2 feet high, much branched, straggly, clone forming. Leaves alternate, simple, blades  $\frac{2}{3}$  to  $1\frac{2}{3}$  inches long,  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{2}{3}$  inch wide, narrow-elliptic to oblong-lanceolate, acute, entire, thin, more or less pubescent, green above, downy below, petioles very short,  $<\frac{1}{16}$  inch long. Twigs very slender, very hairy, nearly round, smooth, greenish brown. Winter buds small, ovoid or oblong, more or less pubescent. Flowers are perfect, borne in small racemose clusters (usually not more than 5-6 per cluster). Calyx 5-toothed, glabrous. Corolla oblong-campanulate,  $\frac{1}{8}$  to  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch long, greenish-white and pink tinged, 5-toothed, stamens 10. Fruit a many-seeded berry, depressed globose, bluish black with much bloom,  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{3}$  inch across, sour to sweet.

**Identification Tips:** This species can be distinguished from other low growing blueberries based on the presence of stiff, dense, bristle-like hairs on the young stems.

**Phenology:** Flowers May through June, fruit matures July through August.

**Range:** *Vaccinium myrtilloides* is a Nearctic endemic, extending from central Labrador to Vancouver Island. In Washington, the taxon is known only from Okanogan County in the Okanogan Highlands physiographic province.

**Habitat:** The Washington population occurs mid-slope in an open semi-mature forest dominated by *Picea engelmannii*. The plants occur where there is a well developed moss layer on the ground. Other species present include *Symphoricarpos albus*, *Cornus canadensis* and *Linnaea borealis*. In other parts of its range, the taxon can occur in dry or moist, sandy or rocky clearings and open woods, also in sphagnum bogs and swamps.

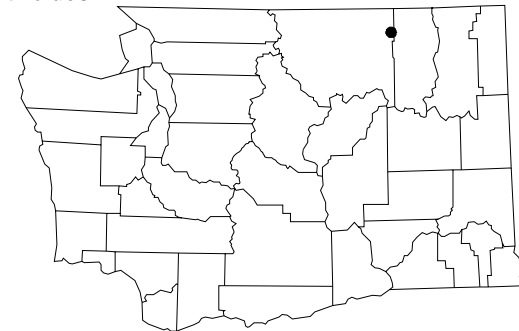
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Known distribution of  
*Vaccinium myrtilloides*  
in Washington



● Current (1980+)  
○ Historic (older than 1980)

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**Ecology:** In natural communities, *Vaccinium myrtilloides* survives fire below ground (Flinn and Wein 1977). Recolonization occurs by rhizomes and the density of new shoots varies depending on when the burn occurs (May or September).

**State Status Comments:** There is only one known population in Washington.

**Inventory Needs:** Additional inventory is needed in appropriate habitats throughout northeastern Washington.

**Threats and Management Concerns:** Timber harvesting, road construction and land conversion are the greatest potential threats to the species.

**References:**

Barnes, B.V., and W.H. Wagner Jr. 1981. *Michigan Trees: A guide to the trees of Michigan and the Great Lakes region*. The University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, MI.

Flinn, M.A., and R.W. Wein. 1977. Depth of underground plant organs and theoretical survival during fire. *Canadian Journal of Botany* 55: 2250-2554.

Vander Kloet, S.P., and I.V. Hall. 1981. The biological flora. 2. *Vaccinium myrtilloides* Michx., Velvet-leaf blueberry. *Canadian Field-Naturalist* 95(3): 329-345.