



Gaylussacia baccata (Wangenh.) K.Koch Huckleberry

Ericaceae (Heath Family)

Blooming season: May - June.

Plant:

To 1 m tall shrub.
Grey bark; young twigs hairy.

Leaves:

Alternate, somewhat leathery.
Ovate or oovate-lanceolate; base wedge shaped.
Medium green above, lighter below, usually pubescent below, at least on midrib.
Shiny or resinous dots, yellow or orange in color, found particularly on under surface.
Leaves turn red in fall.



Flower:

Yellow to red, 3-4mm long.
Urn shaped, 5 petals, 10 stamens.

Fruit:

Blackish-blue drupe ripening in late summer.
Usually 10 nutlets in each drupe.



Can be confused with:

Blueberries (*Vaccinium* spp.), whose leaves do not have resinous dots, and whose fruit is not full of crunchy seeds. Blueberry in our nature area will leaf out before the huckleberry.
Many blueberries are (improperly) referred to as huckleberries.

Geographic range:

Type specimen location:
State: Most of Michigan.
Regional: Newfoundland to Saskatchewan, south to New England, Georgia, and Louisiana.

Habitat:

Local: Upland.
Regional: Prefers acid soils. Found on old dunes, plains, and in wet bogs.



Gaylussacia baccata (Wangenh.) K.Koch
Huckleberry

2

Common local companions:

Oaks, bracken fern, blueberry, and sassafras.

Usages:

Human: Huckleberries, while not as popular as blueberries because of the “nutlets”, are considered tasty and are eaten alone, in baked goods, and in preserves and syrups. Native Americans are reported to have dried them for winter use.

Animal: Many birds eat the fruit, including ruffed grouse, wild turkeys, and mourning doves.

Why is it called *that*?

The species name, *Gaylussacia*, honors Joseph Louis Gay-Lussac (1778-1850), a French chemist (Law of volume of gases). His work laid the foundation of the food canning industry (Smith 1963, 1997). *Baccáta* refers to having fleshy berries.

Prepared by: Barbara Lukacs Grob, December 2007