

- **I would like to grow *vaccinium parvifolium* in my veggie garden. How do I plant this and care for it?**

For a healthy, producing plant, it is all about getting the placement right. Depending on the lay of the land, Red Huckleberry might do well in your shade or woodland garden. However, a veggie garden has much more light requirements than the huckleberry can tolerate. Its native habitat is partial to full shade with rich hummus, extremely well-draining acidic soil. They grow on nurse logs, which allows the winter rains to flow over the roots.

If you have an area like this in your garden Red Huckleberry is best grown from seed or by layering. Transplanting may result in high mortality. You can order from your local nursery or specialty native nursery. Alternatively, you can pick ripe fruit and use the seeds by following these guidelines: Collect fruit when berries are ripe in July through August (they should be bright red). Following collection, chill the fruit to 10 degrees C for several days. Clean the seeds by macerating and floating off the pulp and unsound seed. Clean the seeds carefully. Since they are miniscule, so you may want to use cheesecloth to strain the seed from the pulp. Seeds dried at 15-21 degrees C for two days can be stored in a refrigerator for up to 12 years. Fresh seed not planted in the fall may germinate better if cold stratified for 1-3 months. Stored seed germinates well when exposed to alternating temperature and light regimes of 28 degrees C for 14 hours of day (light) and at 13 degrees C for 10 hours of dark. Fresh or stored and cold-stratified seeds can be sown directly into flats or small pots (a salt shaker can be used for sowing). Plant in a mixture of sand and peat moss. Seedlings will begin to emerge in a month and will continue to emerge for quite some time thereafter. Transplant seedlings into larger pots 6-7 weeks after emergence. Plant outside after the first growing season. Water as needed. Seeds are very slow to sprout and seedlings are small and grow very slowly. The establishment phase of this endeavor is critical—the transplant must receive the proper amount of moisture; too much or too little will lead to certain death!

While not for the faint of heart and assuming you can find the right spot away from your sun loving vegetable garden, you could have a wonderful berry supply for years to come.

Sources:

https://plants.usda.gov/plantguide/pdf/cs_vapa.pdf

<http://nativeplantspnw.com/red-huckleberry-vaccinium-parvifolium/>