

# WILD STRAWBERRY

Latin: *Fragaria virginiana*

Common names: Wild Strawberries

In Penobscot: Mskihkəwimin

## FRUITS & SEEDS

One single strawberry contains multiple tiny fruits - the red of the strawberry is actually a fleshy part holding the tiny fruits together. These tiny fruits are known as achenes (ak-keens) and the seeds themselves are encased in them. These seeds can become new plants but the chances of the plant reproducing are more successful through its runners.

The range for wild strawberries spreads across Eastern North America and into parts of Southern Canada. Wild strawberries can withstand a vast climate, like cold temperatures in the north. This plant's ability to adapt and thrive amidst climate change, through frosts, floods, drought, and late snow is just as amazing as the sweet and unique flavor it has to offer.

## STRUCTURE & ROOT SYSTEM

An herbaceous perennial, meaning their roots stay dormant throughout the winter months and burst back into life in Spring, Wild Strawberries are a ground-hugging plant with the ability to suppress invasive plant species.

Wild strawberries have runners that spread out from the crown, also known as stolons. These runners eventually develop their own root systems becoming a daughter plant. The stolons appear a bright red, shooting out from the nodes of the leaves and spreading out, up to 2 feet long.

## LEAVES & STALKS

Wild strawberry plants can grow up to 7 inches tall. The plant is primarily made up of several trifoliate leaves that emerge from a hairy leafstalk. The leaves themselves are made up of leaflets that are oval-shaped and have toothed edges. There is a midrib running down the center of the leaves with veins running to the edges of the leaf. The undersides of the strawberries are light green whereas the tops are a darker green. There is only one leaf per stalk and three leaflets per leaf.

## FLOWERS

Wild strawberries have flowers that usually bloom in June. The flowers have 5 white petals with a yellow center that consists of the anther and pistil, which are the male and female parts of the flower that self-pollinate (though pollinators help to complete the process.) The flower itself is around 1-3 centimeters wide. The petals eventually wilt away and, in the center, form the strawberry, which can take anywhere from 4-6 weeks to ripen.



## HARVESTING

### LEAVES

All the parts of wild strawberries can be used from the leaves all the way down to the roots. The leaves can be harvested throughout the season, although the young leaves, just before blossom, tend to have the most flavor.

### FRUIT

The fruit is ready to harvest when the strawberry easily comes off the fruit truss with a gentle tug. When you harvest strawberries, you can also cut off a part of the stem at the top of the berry to help preserve the fruit. The fruit is no wider than 1/2 inch, the berries can grow quite large in the right conditions.

### ROOTS

The roots are best to harvest at the end of the growing season after the vegetative growth has died back, making more of the energy focused into the root system.

## USES & STORAGE

At harvest time, it quickly becomes apparent that collecting enough berries for a jam or salad can become quite labor intensive. But, it can be done, although it depends on the amount of berries present, and the patience given to the project.

You can also store them fresh in a jar with a lid so they'll last another couple of weeks. Properly canned jam can be shelved for a year or more and frozen berries can be kept in the freezer for about the same time.

The leaves and roots can also be dried and stored and used for medicinal purposes in teas, tonics, and tinctures.

You can also add strawberries to baked goods or incorporate them into sauces or dressings.

