

## Lesson Guide: Blueberries, the Star Berry

### Vocabulary:

- Blueberry
- Bush
- Berry
- Grow
- Soil

See the attached vocabulary sheet.

### Engage:

- Read the Story attached to this Educators Guide entitled: The Star Berry Story
  - Before reading, discuss with students: “Have you ever picked berries? What did it feel like to find a bush full of ripe berries?” “How did you decide how many to take?”
  - Explain that this is a traditional Anishinaabe/Ojibwe people. teaching passed down through many generations. It teaches where blueberries come from and how people should treat the land.

#### *Special Note:*

- *Anishinaabe (uh-nish-ih-NAH-bay) is like a big family name. It means “Original People” or “Good Humans.” You can think of Anishinaabe as the last name for many different Native nations that are related and share similar traditions, languages, and stories.*
- *Ojibwe (oh-JIB-way) is one nation within that big Anishinaabe family. So if Anishinaabe is the big family name, Ojibwe is one of the “first names” inside that family.*
- After reading, ask students:
  - “What changed between the time of hunger and the morning of the Star Berries?”
  - “Why do blueberries have a small star at the top?”
  - “What responsibilities do the Elders teach about harvesting?”

### Explore and Explain:

- **Activity 1: Indigenous Language and Vocabulary**
  - Students will utilize the student worksheet, to review the 5 vocabulary words, fill in definitions and discuss connections to the story, then add a word from their own Indigenous language or use the provided Ojibwe terms.
  - *This activity introduces cultural, ecological, and linguistic knowledge connected to blueberries.*
- **Activity 2: Draw the Starry Berry**
  - Students will utilize the student worksheet, to draw a blueberry bush with at least 5 berries, color what they drew, ensuring each berry displays the tiny star shape characteristic at the top of the berry, then complete the sentence “Blueberries are special because\_\_\_.”
  - *This activity reinforces observation skills, berry anatomy, and story symbolism.*

### **Elaborate:**

- **Activity 3: The Giving Bush-Harvesting Rules Game**
  - Students will utilize the student worksheet to play a game that reinforces the traditional harvesting practices shared in the Star Berry story.
  - Utilizing berries or representatives of berries (paper, cotton rounds, etc.), students will play 3 rounds of the game to learn what happens when rules of sustainability are followed, when rules are not followed and how repair and gratitude should be forethoughts when harvesting.
  - *This activity models sustainable resource use and Indigenous stewardship ethics*
  
- **Activity 4: Berry Math**
  - Students will utilize the student worksheet to practice counting, grouping, addition, simple fractions and word problem creation.
  - *In this activity students utilize math problems are contextualized in berry harvesting to connect numeracy with real ecological practices.*

### **Evaluate**

- **Activity 5: Story Comprehension Worksheet**

Two separate worksheets:

  - Students K-2 (multiple choice, 3 questions)
  - Students K-5 (open ended, 3 questions)
- **Exit Ticket:** As a class guide students in discussion or have students write responses on a paper for individual shares of the following:
  - ★ One fact about blueberries
  - ★ One cultural lesson from the story
  - ★ One way they will show respect for plants or food

### **Suggested Lesson Activities:**

- Indigenous Vocabulary
- Drawing Star Berries
- Harvesting Rules Game
- Berry Math
- Story Comprehension Worksheet
- Exit Ticket

### **Additional Educator Resources:**

- [Wild blueberries grown and harvested by the Passamaquoddy Tribe](#)
- [Passamaquoddy Wild Blueberry Company](#)
- [Voices From the Barrens: Native People, Blueberries and Sovereignty](#)
- [Passamaquoddy Wild Blueberry Company short video](#)
- [USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service – Blueberries](#)
- [Sautauthing: Blueberries Served Before Pilgrims](#)
- [Native Fruit: The Wild Blueberry](#)
- [Wild Blueberries](#)
- [Wild Blueberry Association](#)

- [How Millions of Pounds Of Wild Blueberries are Harvesting and Processing | Farming Documentary](#)
- [The Beautiful History of Blueberries](#)
- [Anishinaabe / Ojibwe Language Resources – Ojibwe.net](#)
- [Heritage Food Practices](#)
- [USDA Indigenous Food Sovereignty Initiative](#)

# ★ STAR BERRIES ★

## Harvest of the Month: Blueberries

### Grade Levels Included: K–5 Educator's Guide with Activities

Based on the Anishinaabe Star Berry Teaching

Topics: Agriculture · Nutrition · Science · Mathematics · Cultural Traditions

Begin by reading the Star Berry story aloud together as a class. Explain that this is a teaching from the Anishinaabe people that has been shared for many generations. It tells us not only where blueberries come from, but how to treat the land and all living things with respect.

**Before Reading:** Ask students: "Have you ever picked berries? What did it feel like to find a bush full of ripe berries? How did you decide how many to take?" Allow 2–3 minutes of sharing. Then say: *"Today we'll read a traditional story from the Anishinaabe people about blueberries — a story that teaches us not*

## The Star Berry Story

### Star Berries: A Teaching of Resilience, Stewardship, and Relationship

#### Part One: A Hard Time

Long ago, in the land of tall trees, clear lakes, and wide skies, there lived the Anishinaabe people. They were skilled at living with the land. They fished, hunted, gathered plants, and grew their own food.

They knew the names of every plant and animal and treated each one with respect.

But one year, something was different. The rain came late. The sun burned hotter than usual. Plants that normally grew thick and tall were small and struggling. The berry bushes, which usually offered handfuls of deep-blue fruit barely had enough to fill a single basket.

The community grew worried. Children were hungry. Grandparents kept a careful eye on the sky, hoping for rain. Families shared what little food they had, looking out for one another as they always did.

The Elders, the wisest and most experienced people in the community, gathered and spoke quietly to one another. They remembered other hard times in the old stories. They knew that the land had a way of listening, even when things seemed dark.

#### Part Two: The Morning of the Star Berries

One morning, just as the sun was beginning to rise and paint the sky pink and orange, a grandmother went walking through the meadow near the lake. She was looking for anything that might be ripe...even a few berries would help.

She stopped and blinked. Then she looked again.

Where the bushes had been nearly bare the day before, there were now clusters of berries! More berries than she had ever seen growing at once! Deep blue, round, and gleaming with morning dew, the fruit weighed down every branch.

She called out to her family. Then to her neighbors. Soon, the whole community came running. "Look!" cried a young boy, crouching down to peer at a berry. "There's a tiny star on top!"

He was right. At the top of each blueberry, where the flower had once been, there was a small five-point shape, like a tiny star. The children had never noticed it before. The Elders smiled. They had always known it was there.

"These are the Star Berries," said one of the Elders gently. "The land has heard us, and given us this gift."

Families filled their baskets. Children ate handfuls of sweet, cool berries right from the bush, making their mouths turn blue and their eyes wide with delight. The energy and joy that had been missing for weeks came rushing back. Grandparents sat in the shade and sorted berries with grandchildren.

Laughter now filled the meadow.

### **Part Three: The Teaching**

That evening, as the community gathered around the fire, an Elder stood and spoke in a clear, warm voice.

"We are grateful," she said. "The land gave us what we need. But now we must remember our responsibility."

The children listened carefully.

"When you pick berries," she said, "you must pick gently, so that the bush is not broken. You must always leave some berries on the bush. The birds need to eat. And the bears need to eat. The bush needs some of its fruit to fall to the ground so that new bushes can grow next year."

"We take what we need," said another Elder. "We leave the rest. That is how the berries will be here for your children, and their children, and their children after that."

A small girl raised her hand. "How do we know how much to take?"

The Elder smiled. "You pay attention. You observe. You ask yourself, *if everyone took this much, would there still be enough for the animals and the land?* If the answer is yes, you may take what you have gathered. If the answer is no, you put some back."

The children nodded. It was a simple rule, but it took wisdom and practice to follow.

### **Part Four: Passing It On**

Each summer after that, the community held berry-picking camps near the meadow. Families traveled together. Grandparents showed grandchildren exactly how to hold a branch so it would not break, how to look for the tiny star at the top, and how to fill a basket without stripping a single bush bare.

They dried berries in the sun and mixed them with cornmeal into a pudding dish called "sautauthig" (pronounced sawí-taw-teeg). They shared with families who were unable to travel. They gave thanks before picking and provided an offering to each bush. They remained grateful as they returned home with their harvest and didn't waste any of the berries.

The berries were more than food. They were a reminder that the land cares for the people, and in return the people must care for the land.

And so, whenever the Anishinaabe people walk through the meadow and see those small, deep-blue fruits shining in the summer sun, each one marked with a tiny star, they remember. They remember the hard year, the generous gift, the Elder's teachings, and the promise to always be good stewards of the land.

The star at the top of every blueberry is still there today. Look closely next time you hold one — and remember the teaching...

### **Real Berry Science: What Makes Blueberries Special?**

The five-pointed star at the top of a blueberry is real! It is the dried remains of the flower that bloomed before the berry grew. You can see it on every single blueberry.

Blueberries grow wild across many parts of North America — including the Great Lakes region where many Anishinaabe communities live. They are one of the only fruits native to North America. Indigenous peoples have harvested and used blueberries for thousands of years, long before the fruit was sold in grocery stores.

Modern science confirms what traditional knowledge has always shown that blueberries are packed with antioxidants, which help keep the body healthy and strong. They also contain Vitamin C which helps with immunity, fiber aiding in digestion, and natural sugars that provide energy.

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### **Discussion Questions After Reading:**

1. What did the Anishinaabe people notice at the top of each blueberry that made them special?
2. Why did the Elders say harvesters should never strip a bush bare?
3. Have you ever picked berries or shared food with someone? How did it make you feel?
4. What does it mean to be a good steward of the land?

#### **Teacher's Note on Cultural Sensitivity**

This story is drawn from Anishinaabe oral traditions. Present it as a living teaching—not a historical artifact. Center Indigenous voices and knowledge systems as valid, sophisticated, and ongoing. Encourage students to recognize that Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) is a form of science developed through generations of careful observation.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Activity 1: Indigenous Language and Vocabulary

Word	Definition	Connection to Blueberries
Blueberry	A small, round, dark-blue fruit that grows on bushes	Used in the Star Berry story to describe the gift given to the people
Bush	A woody plant, smaller than a tree, where blueberries grow	Blueberry bushes grow low to the ground in forests and meadows
Berry	A small, round, juicy fruit—often eaten fresh or dried	Blueberries, strawberries, and raspberries are all berries
Grow	To get bigger over time; plants grow from seeds to full size	Blueberry bushes grow back each year (they are perennial plants)
Soil	The layer of earth that plants root in and get nutrients from	Blueberries like soil that is acidic and rich in organic matter

### Connect vocabulary words in English and in Indigenous languages

- If you know a word from your own tribal language, write it in the Your Language space.
- If you don't know one yet, you can use the Anishinaabe (Ojibwe) words provided for the Your Language Rewrite space.

Vocabulary Word	English Rewrite	Anishinaabe / Ojibwe	Your Language Rewrite
<b>Blueberry</b>		Miinan	
<b>Bush</b>		Miinagaawanzh	
<b>Berry</b>		Miinis	
<b>Grow</b>		Zaagi'idiwin (grow/flourish)	
<b>Soil</b>		Aki (earth/land)	

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

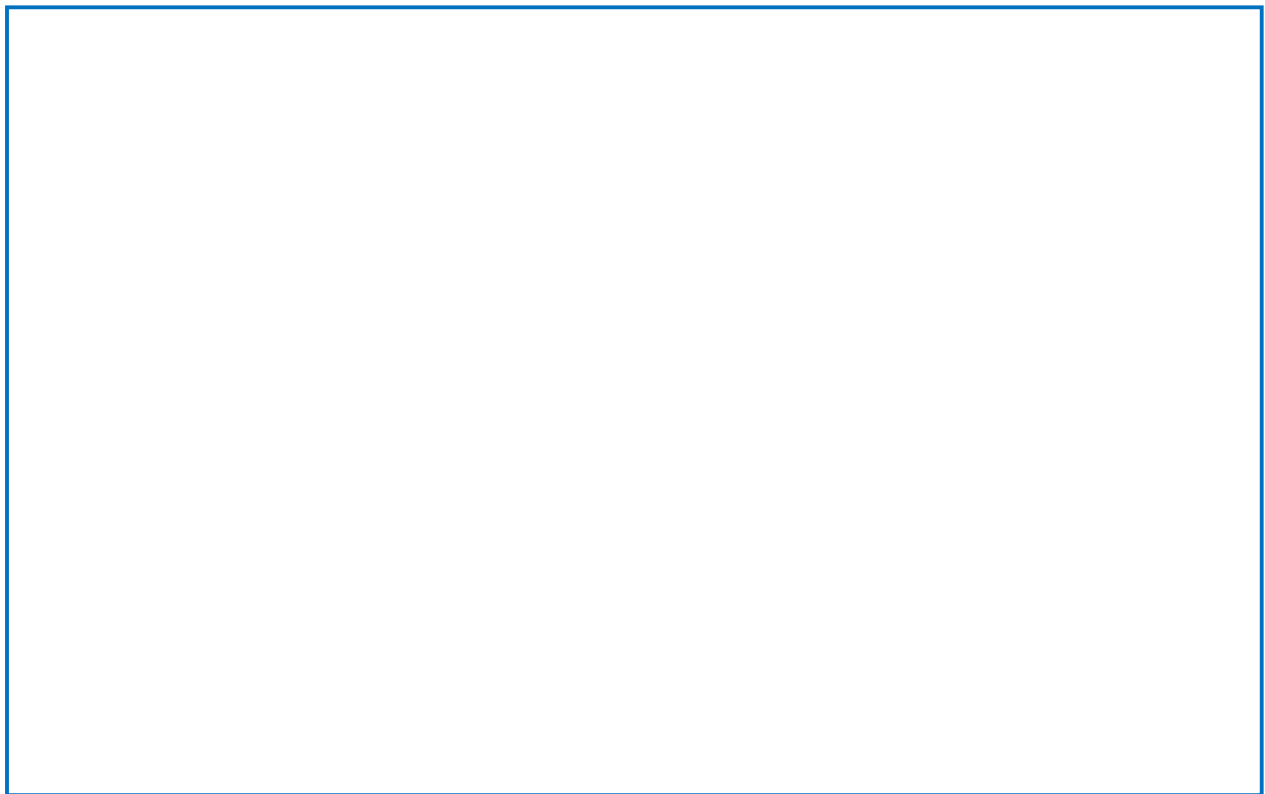
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## Activity 2: Draw the Star Berry

Blueberries have a distinctive five-pointed star-shaped bloom at the top of each berry. This is what gave them their name in the Star Berry teaching. Draw a blueberry bush and make sure to draw berries with the star shape.

### Directions:

1. Draw a blueberry bush with at least 5 blueberries.
2. Color your blueberries dark blue-purple.
3. Draw a tiny 5-pointed star (★) at the top of each blueberry.
4. Write one sentence below your drawing: "Blueberries are special because \_\_\_\_\_."



Blueberries are special because:

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Activity 3: The Giving Bush — Harvesting Rules Game

In this activity, you will learn traditional harvesting principles through a simple game inspired by the Star Berry teaching.

**Teacher Instructions Setup:** Place 20 blue pom-poms or paper "berries" in a bowl (the bush). Divide students into groups of 4.

#### Remember the Rules from the Star Berry Teaching:

1. Leave the first berries for the birds and animals.
2. Each person may only take 2-3 berries per turn.
3. Share with anyone in your group who has none.

**Discussion: What happens if everyone follows the rules? What happens if nobody does?**

#### Round 1 — *Follow the Rules*

- **Prediction:** What do you think will happen to the bush and your group?

I think... \_\_\_\_\_

- **Play:** Take turns and follow the rules.
- **Observation:** What happened? How many berries stayed in the bush?

We noticed... \_\_\_\_\_

#### Round 2 — *No Rules (for science!)*

- **Prediction:** What do you think will happen if nobody follows the rules?

I think... \_\_\_\_\_

- **Play:** Take turns without the rules for a few minutes.
- **Observation:** What happened to the bush? How did people feel?

We noticed... \_\_\_\_\_

#### Pause & Discuss (whole group):

- What happens if everyone follows the rules?
- What happens if nobody does?
- Which way felt better for people, animals, and the bush? Why?

#### Round 3 — *Repair & Gratitude*

- **Action:** Gently put **5 berries back** into the bush. Say or write a **thank-you** (gratitude) to the bush or land.

My gratitude message: \_\_\_\_\_

- **Observation:** How did "repair" help the bush and your group?

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Activity 4: Berry Math

Use blueberries to practice counting, adding, and simple fractions while connecting to nutrition and traditional food practices.

1. Count 10 blueberries (real, dried, or paper).

Sort them into groups:

- groups of 2
- groups of 5
- groups of 3

Which grouping made leftovers? Why do you think that happened?

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2. A blueberry bush has 24 berries. You leave 6 for the birds. How many can you pick?

\_\_\_\_\_ berries

3. You picked 10 berries. You share half with your friend. How many does each person get?

\_\_\_\_\_ berries each

4. There are 5 blueberry bushes. Each has about 30 berries. How many berries total?

\_\_\_\_\_ berries

5. Draw and write your own berry math problem below. Cut it out and trade with a partner, then solve each other's problem!

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Activity 5: Story Comprehension Worksheet

**Teacher Instructions Setup:** Students K–2 answer multiple choice questions. Students grades 3–5 complete the open-ended reflection.

### K–2: Circle the Correct Answer

1. What shape is found at the top of each blueberry?  
a) A circle   b) A star   c) A heart   d) A square
2. What did the Elders teach about picking berries?  
a) Pick every single berry   b) Only pick green berries  
c) Never strip a bush bare   d) Only pick in winter
3. What did families use blueberries for?  
a) Building homes   b) Eating, sharing, and drying for storage  
c) Making tools   d) Decoration only

### Grades 3–5: Open-Ended Reflection

**1. Why do you think the Anishinaabe people called blueberries "Star Berries"?**

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**2. What is one harvesting rule from the Star Berry teaching? Why is it important?**

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**3. How is taking care of a blueberry bush like taking care of something you love?**

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Exit Ticket Activity: Three Things I Learned**

Share or write:

- ★ One fact about blueberries
- ★ One cultural lesson from the story
- ★ One way they will show respect for plants or food