

# Wild Black Cherry

(*Prunus serotina*)

## Rose Family – Rosaceae

Cherries are in the rose family, and are distributed over most of the eastern half of the United States. The leaves are elliptical, finely toothed, dark green above and lighter beneath. The twigs are reddish-brown that, when scratched, emit a strong, pungent odor. Black cherry trees are the largest and most useful of the wild cherries in those areas where it grows.



### Parts Used

- inner bark
- fruit

### Edible Uses

Black cherry fruits begin ripening in July in southern areas and August on higher elevations and farther north. They are about one-fourth inch in diameter and turn almost black when fully ripe. In the center is a single stone. Fruits are sweet and juicy and can be eaten raw off the tree for a thirst quencher or made into a juice that is blood-building and strengthening.



**Black Cherry Juice** – Place 2 cups cherries in a saucepan. Add ¼ cup water and heat just to point of boiling. Cook 10-15 minutes longer on medium heat. Use a foley food mill or press through a sieve to separate the juice from the seeds.

### Medicinal Uses

Wild cherry bark is anti-tussive; a tincture from the bark suppresses coughing and is used to treat asthma, bronchitis, and other respiratory conditions (Wood, M., 2009). Wild cherry bark has been used traditionally for coughs, fevers, colds, sore throats, lung ailments, bronchitis, pneumonia, and other ailments (Foster and Duke, 2003).

### Constituents

Bark, leaves, and seeds contain a glycoside, prunasin, which is converted to hydrocyanic acid (HCN) as it decomposes (Hoffman, 2003). Cattle have been poisoned from eating wilted foliage of wild cherry trees and children have been poisoned from eating too many cherry pits.

### Caution

Large doses of wild cherry bark can be toxic.



### References

Foster, S. and Duke. (2003). *Eastern/central medicinal plants and herbs*. New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Co.

Hoffman, D. (2003). *Medical herbalism: The science and practice of herbal medicine*. Rochester, VT: Healing Arts Press.

Wood, M. (2009). *The earthwise herbal: A complete guide to new world medicinal plants*. Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books.

### Black Cherry Syrup

2 cups black cherry juice

1 cup organic cane sugar

Bring to a boil and continue to boil gently for 10-15 minutes. Cherries contain natural pectin and will thicken naturally when heated.