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with the Littleton Garden Club

Serviceberry

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Littleton Garden Club

Reflecting on values at year's end to nourish in the new year- I think of gratitude and community. Those two have stood out to me as worth cultivating more as the calendar changes to 2025.

I recently received a newly published nonfiction book from my sister. It's called "The Serviceberry: Abundance and Reciprocity in the Natural World" by Robin Wall Kimmerer and illustrated by John Burgoyne that spoke to me about those very values.

Kimmerer is a best-selling author of "Braiding Sweetgrass," which I also read. She is a citizen of the Potawatomi Nation from the Great Lakes area and a scientist that pays close attention to the natural world.

As an indigenous scientist, Kimmerer harvested serviceberries alongside hungry birds. She mentions the concept of reciprocity. Our economy is rooted in competition, & hoarding of resources. We have altered

our values to a system that harms what we love.

Somehow, the serviceberry has a relationship with the natural world that illustrates reciprocity and gratitude. Serviceberry bushes share "wealth"—its abundance of sweet, juicy berries. They seem to accommodate the needs of its community. That kind of distribution actually inures its own survival.

There are many common names of this plant including "serviceberry."

Robin Kimmerer states: "the more names a plant has, the "greater its cultural importance".

She states that serviceberries are medicinal fruits that also synchronize "the seasonal rounds of traditional Indigenous people, who move in an annual cycle through their homelands to where the foods are ready."

This is a short but powerful book. I felt immersed in her strong connection to the land. Economic ideas are discussed in terms we can all relate to. I will heartily recommend it to friends

and family members.

Serviceberry is the common name and *Amelanchier* is the Latin name for the genus of plants.

Some other common names are shadbush, shadwood, shadblow, sarvisberry, juneberry, saskatoon, sugarplum, wildplum or chuckley pear. It's a genus of about 20 species of deciduous-leaved shrubs and small trees in the rose family.

In its native habitat, serviceberry is an understory tree. It grows in wooded areas. In cultivation it performs best in moist, well-drained soil.

The trees bear clusters of fragrant white flowers in early spring. Then, flavorful, red to almost purple-black, berrylike fruits appear. They are relished by both songbirds and people. This tree has colorful fall foliage in a blend of orange, gold, red and green.

Our NH extension service has a list of native serviceberries on their website. They recommend the Saskatoon serviceberry (*Amelanchier alnifolia*) for doing well

in our area. It's a shrub/small tree that grows suckers from the base and spreads by underground rhizomes (similar to grass), creating a bushy habit at maturity, and is quite pretty.

I visited the Backyard Forager Web site and they are quoted as saying: "Serviceberry is the most delicious fruit you aren't eating."

I have not yet personally tried the fruit- but look forward to growing a serviceberry and testing a Serviceberry Pie recipe seen on their website. They said Serviceberries are nutritious, with a similar profile to blueberries, subtle flavoring but higher in protein.

In the meantime, life is slightly sweeter with a little gratitude and a bunch of community!

For more information about the Littleton Garden Club- visit our Web site at: <https://www.littletonnhgardenclub.org/>. There is a link to our Facebook account. We are always welcoming new members to our group.