

# Sugar Mountain™ Blue Haskap

*Lonicera caerulea*



Haskap may sound like a funny word, but this healthful, tasty fruit is no joke!

Haskaps look like an oversized, elongated blueberry. They are not only easier to grow than blueberries, but they also contain far higher levels of antioxidants and three times the amount of vitamin C. Their odd name comes from the Japanese word *hasukappu*, the name under which these berries have been enjoyed for centuries in Hokkaido, Japan's northernmost prefecture. Haskaps are one of the hardiest edible plants on earth, tolerating temperatures as cold as -50°F (-45.6°C).

**Sugar Mountain™ Blue** was specially selected in the Czech Republic for its extra-large, luscious fruits. Once you taste these berries, you won't be able to get enough, and planting a pollinator variety with **Sugar Mountain™ Blue** will provide the most abundant fruit set - look for **Sugar Mountain™ Balalaika™**, **Polar Bear™**, or **Kalinka™**. Haskaps can be eaten fresh right from the bush, cooked into jam, pressed for juice, or made into sauce or pie filling. The fruits can also be dried or frozen to enjoy a taste of summer on a cold winter's night.

## Growing Haskaps

**Zone:** Hardy to USDA zone 1, heat tolerant to AHS zone 6

**Exposure:** Full sun (6+ hours)

**Height:** 5-6' (1.5-1.8 m) tall

**Water:** Average water needs; tolerant of some drought once established.

**Soil:** Adaptable to any well-drained soil, regardless of pH. Grows best with abundant organic matter, and the use of a shredded bark mulch is recommended.

**Pollinators:** Plant any pollinator variety within 25' (7.6 m) of **Sugar Mountain™ Blue** for best fruit set. Planting just one shrub will result in far fewer and much smaller fruits.

**Pests:** Haskaps are generally not bothered by deer. Birds may eat the berries as they ripen, but can be deterred by draping plants with bird netting. Powdery mildew may appear during periods of excessive humidity, however, it is not a serious threat to the plant's health. Site in full sun and with good air circulation to minimize this fungal disease.

**Pruning:** Plants should not be pruned until they have spent three years in the ground. After that, remove any dead wood and thin congested portions of the plant to encourage new growth elsewhere. Cut back tips of stems to encourage branching, as lateral branches bear more fruit. Prune immediately after harvest ONLY. Haskaps flower and fruit on old wood, so pruning at any other time of the year will reduce fruit set.

**Fertilizing:** These tolerant, adaptable plants do not need a highly fertile environment to grow well. However, a granular fertilizer formulated for woody plants applied at bud-break each spring helps to encourage the formation of strong, abundant growth which will bear heavily the following season.

**Harvesting:** The berries begin to ripen in early summer, around the same time as strawberries. **Sugar Mountain™ Blue** ripens more evenly than traditional haskap varieties. They shift from green to blue-purple with a waxy white bloom. The superficial color change does not necessarily indicate ripeness, however; unripe berries are sour and green inside, rather than a plum-like purple. Taste fruits or cut in half to determine readiness. Be patient; it may take several weeks after the skin changes color. Ripe berries hold well on the plant for several weeks, so you can wait until a large quantity is ready to harvest at once if you prefer.



## Keys to Haskap Success:

- Plants flower and fruit on old wood, so if pruning is required, do so immediately after harvest.
- Plant two different varieties for pollination. Planting two **Sugar Mountain™ Blue**, for example, will not boost fruit production, but planting one **Sugar Mountain™ Blue** and one pollinator variety like **Sugar Mountain™ Balalaika™**, will. Research has shown that one pollinator to every 24 fruiting plants is sufficient in an orchard setting.
- Because plants fruit on old wood, your crops for the first few years may be hidden deep within the plant. Don't miss them! Spread the branches apart and look for them closer to the base of the plant.

## Haskap Compote

Haskaps are so tasty, you're likely to eat them straight from the bush! But should you find yourself with a cup or so of these luscious fruits that you wish to transform into something spectacular, try this versatile compote. It can be spooned over ice cream; drizzled over yogurt or oatmeal; or dolloped atop pancakes, waffles, or sponge cake.

1 c **Sugar Mountain™** haskap berries  
½ c granulated sugar (or more, depending on the sweetness of your berries and your taste preferences)  
One-half a lemon

Place haskap berries in small saucepan. Sprinkle ½ cup of sugar over them, and turn on medium-low heat. The berries should quickly begin to soften and disintegrate. At this point, stir gently. Allow to simmer for 5-10 minutes, until juices thicken. Taste for sweetness, adding more sugar if necessary. Stir sugar in well and allowing to simmer a few moments. Squeeze in lemon juice, stir. Serve warm, or refrigerate until ready for use.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### >> What do the berries taste like?

Everyone describes their flavor differently. Many compare their taste to a cross between a blueberry and raspberry or blackberry. Their texture is similar to a blueberry, however, and the skin is very thin, soft, and melts in your mouth. They are sweet enough to eat straight from the plant.

### >> Do the berries have seeds?

Haskap berries do have seeds, however, they are very small and not really noticeable, much like in a blueberry.

### >> Is haskap a vine or shrub type honeysuckle?

Shrub type. It forms an attractive, rounded, upright habit and does not need any kind of support or staking.

### >> Is it invasive?

Though many honeysuckles are problematic invasive plants, haskap has shown no signs of invasiveness anywhere it is grown. It does not run or sucker, and if you harvest the fruit for your own use, the birds won't get to it anyway.

### >> How far apart can I plant my two varieties and still get fruit?

**Sugar Mountain™ Blue** haskap flowers in the earliest days of spring, when insects are still quite weak from their winter dormancy. Therefore, shrubs planted closer together have a better chance at pollination than those planted far apart. Though you will likely still get fruit if you plant one in your front yard and the other in your back yard, you will get significantly more fruit if they are planted within 10' of one another. If spacing them closely, place them about 5' apart to allow for maximum growth.

### >> Are haskaps like a holly, where only one of the two plants will get fruit?

No. Every variety of **Sugar Mountain™** haskap produces fruit because unlike holly, they have both male and female parts in every flower. You need to plant two different varieties only because each plant fruits best when it receives pollen from an individual with different characteristics than its own.