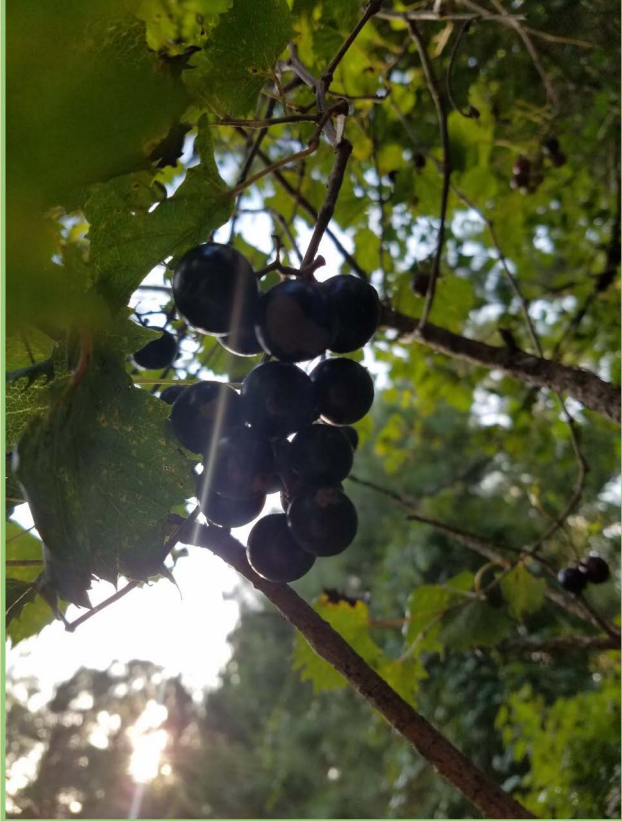


URBAN FORAGING



A guide to a selection of edible plants on the University of South Alabama's campus

MUSCADINE

Vitis rotundifolia Choctaw: Suko



Muscadine grapes are a common climbing vine with spikey heart-shaped leaves set in an alternating sequence. The grapes ripen in August through to September, turning from green to a deep purple. They grow in small clumps set behind the leaves, so it helps to be able to get under the mass of vines to spot them. Not every vine will produce grapes, so it can be a bit of a hunt to find some.



The grapes themselves are pretty different from the big mild-flavored grapes from the store. These have pits and a thick skin, and while you can eat them whole, many people prefer to suck the pulp out of the skin and

then spit out the seeds. The flavor is much richer and stronger than store-bought grapes.

CHICKASAW PLUM

Prunus augustifolia Choctaw: Issi Itakonlush



The Chickasaw plum is a medium tree that produces small red plums in August to September. The plums have a sweet, but slightly tart taste. The Native Plant Garden has two labeled Chickasaw Plum trees growing directly beside the entrance to the Archaeology Museum.



AMERICAN PERSIMMON

Diospyros virginiana

Choctaw: Ukof



Persimmons are a small (2in) round orange fruit similar to a peach or plum. They grow on trees noted for their rough, alligator-hide bark and long lime green leaves. Persimmons ripen mid-fall around September and continue to drop fruit into winter. When ripe, the squishy jelly-soft fruit drops from the tree. The fruit has four to six large flat seeds.

Ripe persimmons are extremely sweet, with a taste somewhat similar to a sweet peach. Be sure that the fruit is fully ripe (completely soft and squishy) before eating, as unripe persimmons are astringent and will suck the moisture out of your mouth.



There are six or seven persimmon trees on campus, with the most productive being on a



small driveway connecting the north Humanities parking lot to the Archeology Lab parking lot.

BLUEBERRIES

Vaccinium sp.

Choctaw: Sheki Fvnachu



The two blueberry species on campus are the Mayberry, also known as Elliot's Blueberry, and the Sparkleberry. Both are tall bushes with smooth, oval leaves. The Mayberries ripen in early spring and are very plentiful and delicious. They are very similar to store-bought blueberries, but smaller and slightly tarter. There are a handful of Mayberry bushes in the Native Plant Garden along the stairs down into the garden.



Sparkleberries ripen around September and are available into Winter. They are smaller and less sweet than typical blueberries. There is a large Sparkleberry bush in the Native Plant Garden, right next to the crosswalk across USA S Drive.

LOQUATS

Eriobotrya japonica



Loquats are a small tree native to China, but often planted for its ornamental value. Flowers bloom late fall, and fruits ripen late winter to early spring. The leaves are



large, dark green, and leathery, growing in a circular pattern around the fruiting stems. The leaves look somewhat like magnolias from afar. They produce bundles of small, yellow orange fruit that taste like a

BLACK BERRIES AND DEWBERRIES

Rubus sp.

Choctaw: Bissa



Blackberries and dewberries are small brambles that produce juicy black compound berries throughout the summer from late May through June. Dewberries grow on red trailing vines with clusters of 5 serrated

leaves, while blackberries grow on more of a small thorny bush with groups of 3 wide serrated leaves. Be careful when picking, as it's easy to reach into a bush for a berry and pull it out with a handful of thorns. These berries also attract wildlife, and they are infamously popular among snakes.

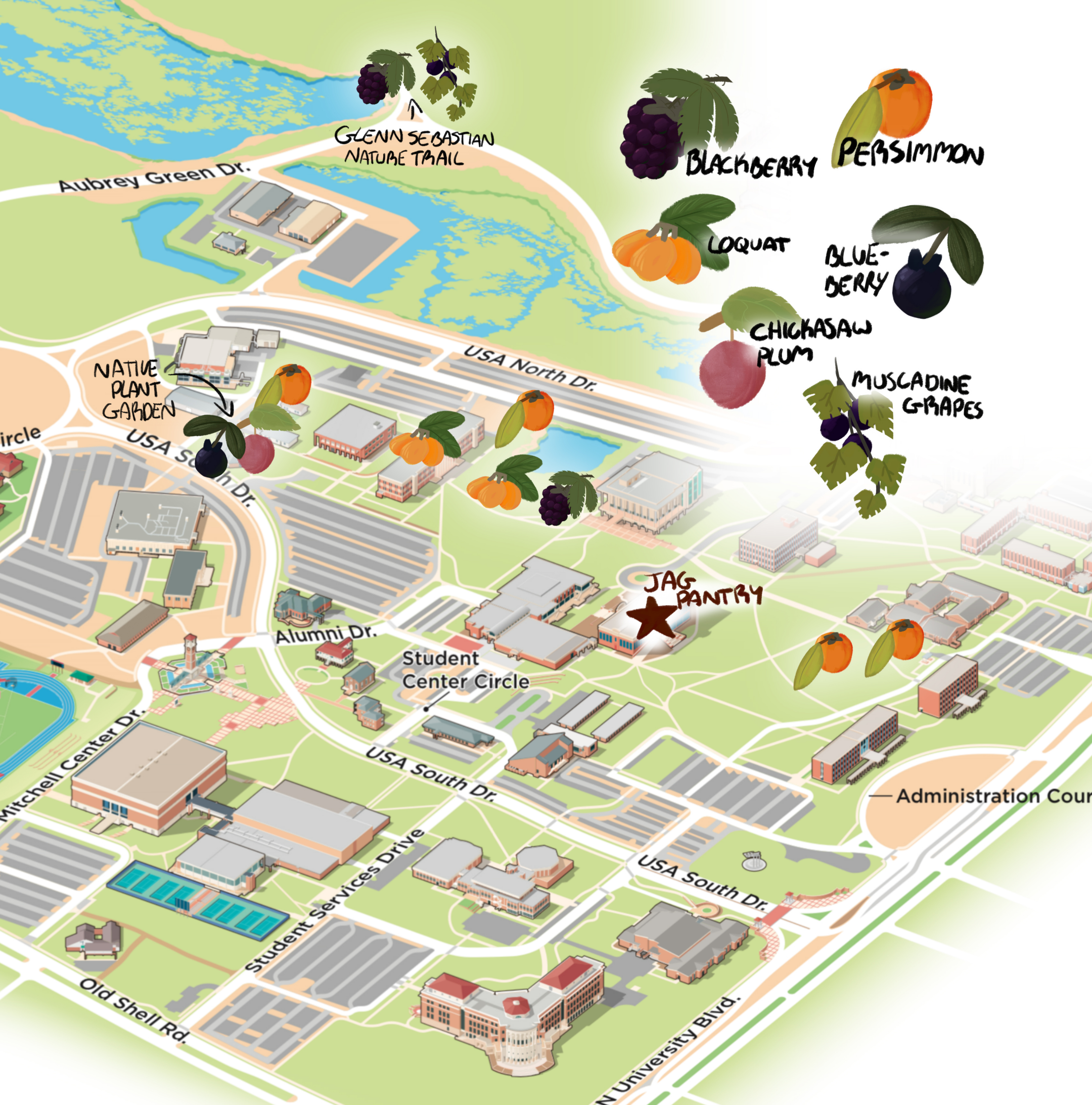
The berries are similar between both species, and they both taste roughly the same as store bought blackberries, though they may be slightly more tart since they don't typically get as big.

Dewberries grow as a weed across many of the wilder areas of campus that aren't mowed, and I have seen blackberries growing along the Glenn Sebastian Nature Trail.



Other local food sources include the *Community Garden*, located near the *Intramural Fields* and maintained by the *Biology Student Association*, and *JagPantry* in *Meisler Hall*.





Foraging wild foods has been humanity's main method of acquiring plant food for most of our history, and those wild edibles didn't just disappear when the first supermarket opened. Edible plants are still all around us, even here on South's campus! From loquats in the spring, to wild grapes and persimmons in the fall, there is a wide variety of delicious fruit available here all year round. Here we have marked a selection of 6 edible species on a map, with information on the harvest season, taste, and appearance of each one. Get out there and give them a try!

Never eat any parts of a plant unless you are 100% sure of its identity, edibility, and ripeness. Always wash foraged food thoroughly before consumption. Do not eat fruit with holes or discoloration. Some of the fruits listed drop to the ground when ripe, make sure that these fruits are whole and round without flat spots that would indicate they have been sitting there for a while.

Developed by Chris Peterson as a course project for the Anthropology of Food in the Fall of 2021.