

ACTAEA RUBRA (Ait.) Willd.  
Red Baneberry

FAMILY: Ranunculaceae

SYNONYMS: *Actaea spicata* L. ssp. *rubra* (Ait.) Hulten

HABIT: Erect, herbaceous perennial, 4-8 dm.; flowering May-July; fruiting August.

SIMILAR SPECIES: *Actaea rubra* is often confused with the common white baneberry, *Actaea pachypoda*. The best character is the pedicel that is very slender in *Actaea rubra* and strongly thickened in *A. pachypoda*. Color of the fruit typically is white in *A. pachypoda* and red in *A. rubra*, but color forms may occur which invalidate this character. Non-flowering plants are not identifiable. Vegetative plants also may be confused with plants of black cohosh (*Cimicifuga racemosa*).

TOTAL RANGE: Lab. and Nfld. to AK, s. to CT, n. NJ, n. IN, IA, and AZ.

STATE RANGE: There are post-1980 collections from Ashtabula, Greene and Lucas counties. There are pre-1980 collections from Columbiana, Erie, Ottawa, and Sandusky counties.

HABITAT: Moist, rich woods and thickets.

HAZARDS: Unknown; possibly digging of plants by wildflower gardeners or opening of the forest canopy through logging.

RECOVERY POTENTIAL: Unknown, but there are reports of successful transplantings.

INVENTORY GUIDELINES: Collect mature flowering or fruiting specimens.

COMMENTS: When not in bloom or fruit, the plants are easily overlooked. Because of this and the confusion with white baneberry, this species may be more frequent than the records indicate.

This taxon is treated by some authors as the North American subspecies of a circumpolar entity, *A. spicata* (see Synonym). This treatment has only gained limited acceptance. The taxon is here retained as *A. rubra* pending further research.

SELECTED REFERENCES:

Bacon, A.E. 1903. An experiment with the fruit of Red Baneberry. *Rhodora* 5: 77-79.

Fernald, M.L. 1940. What is *Actaea alba*? *Rhodora* 42: 247-254.

Henry, L.K. and W.B. Buker. 1958. The Ranunculaceae of western Pennsylvania. *Castanea* 23: 33-46.

Mitchell, R.S. and J.K. Dean. 1982. Ranunculaceae of New York State. *New York State Museum Bull.* 446. 100 p.



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