

Do You Know Why Mulberry Trees Were Banned?

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STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- › Certain U.S. cities have banned mulberry trees due to the immense amount of pollen they produce
- › Mulberry trees are on nearly every continent and have a long history of food use, as well as preventing disease
- › Traditional medicinal uses for mulberries included treating diseases of the mouth, throat and lungs, strengthening bone tissue, protecting vision, improving metabolism, increasing blood circulation and acting as a treatment for dysentery and a digestive aid
- › Mulberries contain vitamins C, K, B-complex, A and E, iron, potassium, magnesium and resveratrol, each bringing their own constituents for health
- › Mulberries have the potential to increase beneficial brown fat via a natural plant compound called rutin, which has shown potential for lowering obesity in lab animals

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Depending on where you live in the U.S., it's possible you have wandered in some wooded areas or even your neighborhood, stopping occasionally to snack on mulberries growing in abundance, since mulberry trees are very hardy and grow just about anywhere.

Many people have seen and arguably tasted at least one mulberry, but very few people know anything about these little clusters that don't seem very high up on the scale of

important fruits. Maybe it's because they're so accessible.

All you have to do to harvest mulberries is place a blanket under a tree and shake the branches until the fruit falls.

Mulberries are similar to raspberries but grow in a longer cluster that clings to the stem rather than being easily plucked. The leaves are finely scalloped and usually heart- or mitten-shaped. There are more than 100 varieties of mulberry trees and bushes.

The *Morus rubra* is the American version, but there are many others, including the Russian mulberry, and white and black mulberries from Africa and Asia. The trees grow very fast but are slow to bear fruit depending on the type. Buzzle reveals:

"Mulberry trees have a lengthy growing season, which in turn, ensures abundant crop. Having said that, if you are planning to grow mulberry trees for their fruits, you will have to be patient as it will take at least 10 years for the trees to start bearing fruits."¹

Facts About Mulberry Trees

Mulberry trees grow in every state but Nevada and Alaska, hinting at their climate preference.

This woody berry producer will reach 40, 60 and even 80 feet in height, depending on the variety.

The red mulberry lives as long as 75 years, but the black variety lives and produces fruit for centuries.²

Depending on how ripe the berries are, several colors are represented on one tree.

Mulberry trees will grow 10 feet in a single season and produce strong, tough roots.

The little fruit clusters contain a single seed, which makes mulberries a drupe.

Mulberries are used to make breads, muffins, pies, jam, wine and ice cream, just like other berries, or dried and added to salads. They have a unique set of healing qualities

as well.

Mulberries – Humble, Inexpensive Fruit Used in Traditional Medicine

A review published in India noted that a mulberry-based tonic has several health benefits:³

“The raw mulberry juice is squeezed out of the mulberry fruit with delicate fragrance and taste.

This juice will enhance the health, such as yin nourishing, enriching the blood, notifying the liver and kidney, calming the nerves, promoting the metabolism of alcohol, balancing internal secretions and enhancing immunity.”

These little fruits have been used by a long line of traditional health practitioners over hundreds and probably thousands of years. As far back as the Roman Empire, mulberries were used to treat **diseases of the mouth**, throat and lungs. Native Americans discovered them to have a laxative effect and used them to treat dysentery.⁴

Nutritionally, mulberries contain an assortment of high-powered nutrients, such as vitamins C, K, B-complex, A and E, each bringing their own constituents for health. They also contain iron, **potassium**, folate, thiamine, pyridoxine (vitamin B6), niacin (vitamin B3) and magnesium.

One of the most beneficial resources in mulberries is resveratrol, said to “promote heart health and overall vitality.”⁵ A study published in Evidence-Based Complementary and Alternative Medicine notes:⁶

“Traditionally, mulberry fruit has been used as a medicinal agent to nourish the yin and blood, benefit the kidneys and treat weakness, fatigue, anemia and premature graying of hair. It is also used utilized to treat urinary incontinence, tinnitus, dizziness and constipation in the elderly and the anemic.”

Other claims linked to eating mulberries range from **strengthening eyesight** to nourishing the blood to “blackening” hair.

Modern Mulberry Health Advantages

Medical News Today reports that one breakthrough regarding the health aspects of mulberries is their ability to increase brown fat.

What’s brown fat? White fat is the calorie-stuffed substance you don’t want while brown fat has the ability to burn calories and help **fight obesity**. Scientists used to think only babies had brown fat, but in 2009 it was found in adults, particularly those with a low body mass index (BMI). Live Science⁷ lists five little-known facts about brown fat:

- Time spent in the cold, be it a refrigerated warehouse or the frozen tundra, has a tendency to produce brown-fat cells and makes those you have more active.
- Brown and white fat is often mixed, but it’s detected in CT (computerized tomography) scans. It’s hard to find, though, which is why it took so long to discover it.
- Everybody has some brown fat, some more than others.
- It sometimes shows up in unexpected places, such as your neck and shoulder region, the most typical area. Other times it’s in your chest, spine or abdomen.
- Scientists project that before too long, a pill will be able to activate brown fat – the same drug used to combat an overactive bladder, but there are natural ways to increase brown fat.

In regard to obesity and overweight, suffered by a staggering 1 in 3 U.S. adults and 1 in 6 children and adolescents, the risk for high blood pressure, heart disease, Type 2 diabetes, stroke and cancer are much higher.

Scientists also say that a lifestyle change is an efficient and effective way to increase your brown fat and, simultaneously, lower your disease risk.

Rutin Mimics Brown Fat to Cut Obesity Rates

Rutin is a flavonoid found in a selection of fruits and vegetables that helps your body boost its ability to produce [collagen](#), your skin's most important building block.⁸

In one study,⁹ researchers added rutin, a natural compound extracted from mulberry, to the drinking water of two groups of mice, one group being genetically obese and the other with diet-induced obesity. Medical News Today reported:¹⁰

"In both groups of mice, rutin was found to activate brown adipose tissue, or brown fat (BAT), which led to increased energy expenditure, better glucose homeostasis – the balance of insulin and glucagon to maintain glucose levels – and fat reduction."

As a result of the study, scientists concluded that rutin is a key therapy to help people combat obesity and the health problems associated with it.

Additional Advantages of Eating Mulberries

Especially for our forebears, wild mulberries and even the leaves represented a welcome and necessary part of their diets. They contain a plethora of valuable ingredients, including protein and fiber. Nowadays they're even offered in health food stores and farmer's markets.

Eating mulberries helps aid digestion, build bone tissue, protect vision, improve metabolism and increase blood circulation.¹¹ There are many ways the nutrients they contain will help improve health. Mulberry consumption also helps:

Support your immune system due to the presence of alkaloids that kick-start macrophages, the white blood cells that stimulate your immune system, to be on guard against conditions that threaten your health¹²

Cleanse and enrich your blood and help prevent blood clots^{13,14}

Lower your blood sugar, scientists believe, due to compounds that suppress blood glucose levels¹⁵

Flood your body with antioxidants, including resveratrol, which one study revealed has positive effects on fighting early aging and promoting longevity¹⁶

Protect your brain, according to an animal study in Thailand that focused on brain damage and **memory impairment**, as subjects came away with both improved memories and reduced oxidative stress¹⁷

Prevent colds and flu via vitamin C and flavonoids

Cleanse your liver and optimize your kidney function

Decrease **inflammation** due to the compound oxyresveratrol¹⁸ and, according to one study, act as a key ingredient with curcumin to lower this effect in vascular cells¹⁹

So, Why Would Mulberry Trees Be Banned?

As healthy as mulberries have been shown to be, the City of Tucson, Arizona, took it upon itself to ban the humble mulberry tree a few decades ago, claiming that the immense amount of pollen it produces is harmful to humans. What's up with that?

The fruit develops early and drops quickly, which is messy. Mulberries are very popular with birds, which, when aloft, scatter the seeds widely, making the tree's proliferation even greater. Buzzle says that's another reason for whole cities to run them out of town:

"While definitely helpful, mulberry trees are notorious for their pollen production, which can well exceed the admissible count of 1,500 in the spring season. It was precisely for this reason that the city administration of Tucson, Arizona, banned it in 1984. The city of Las Vegas, Nevada, followed suit citing the same reason in 1991, and El Paso, Texas, followed a year later in 1992."

History of Mulberries and Silk Production

Many people associate mulberry trees with silk, since for centuries in China, Japan and, later, a number of European countries, mulberry leaves were, and still are, the sole food for silkworm moths. After laying about 300 eggs, the moths spin cocoons of silk thread that are hundreds of feet long for five days. It was a long but perpetual process.

For that reason alone, cultivation of mulberry trees, especially the white variety, has been a big business. Silk Road²⁰ reveals how important silk was to China, which kept their elaborate production process a secret for about 1,000 years. By the 5th century, several provinces were involved in silkworm production and subsequent weaving, dyeing and embroidering. During the Han Dynasty, silk had a trade value not unlike that of gold or grain.

You'd think that silk as a textile would have waned considerably since synthetic silk, aka rayon, as well as [nylon](#), [polyester](#), [acetate](#), [spandex](#) and a dozen other man-made materials are so easy to come by. Many people tried to imitate it over the centuries. Not just the silk, but the actual tree came in handy for these new fabrics.

But silk production is just as healthy as it once was, with China, again, in the lead. Once the truth came out about mulberry leaves being the key for silk production, the news spread, as did mulberry tree propagation on nearly every continent. That's why there are so many types of mulberry trees throughout the world today. Next time you see one, give the berries a try.

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