

USDA Forest Service Botany in the News

Keweenaw Bay Indian Community Hosts Cranberry Crop Wild Relative Workshop

The [Keweenaw Bay Indian Community \(KBIC\)](#) of Baraga County in Michigan's Upper Peninsula hosted a first ever Cranberry Crop Wild Relative (CWR) Workshop for CWR partnering efforts between KBIC, the [Forest Service Eastern Region](#), the [USDA Agricultural Research Service \(ARS\)](#), [Cedar Tree Institute](#), [Zaagkii Wings and Seeds Project](#), and the [Chicago Botanic Garden](#). The ultimate goal of the group cranberry project is to conserve the range of genetic variation in wild cranberry, starting with populations on National Forests and potentially tribal lands also. The partnership focuses on the strengths of each partnering group in behest of our essential CWRs. These plants are the wild species from which our domesticated plant species (food, fiber, oils, etc.) originated and now are grown and inextricably linked to people the world over. The conservation of CWRs represents an emerging and essential challenge throughout the world and climate change and the resulting food security issues now exacerbate the challenge considerably. The ARS has developed a list of important CWRs for the United States. Both agencies now work together to conserve CWRs via *in situ* and *ex situ* techniques.



For additional and more detailed information regarding CWR, our native cranberries, and our work in both the Eastern and Southern Regions of the Forest Service please visit [Celebrating Wildflowers Ethnobotany Crop Wild Relatives](#).

Both treaty lands and national forests represent important locations that harbor these essential native plants – our CWRs. This “first of a kind” workshop focused on the ARS strategies and collection protocol



Wild cranberries.

for the complementary conservation (*in situ* and *ex situ*) of our two native cranberry

species. Both cranberry species were sampled at a large bog within KBIC (Sand Point Bog) using a protocol developed by ARS. KBIC workshop attendees were trained in the techniques and then implemented the collection. It is hoped that this CWR cadre will be available to both collect in additional

locations and to train others to do so. Ultimately, samples will be analyzed to identify key characteristics among the various cranberry locations and populations collected.

A subset of locations and populations will be selected as *in situ* Genetic Resource Reserve (IGRR) for both cranberry species. It is anticipated that selected cranberry populations within Forest Service areas such as Research Natural Areas (RNA) and Wilderness Areas could serve well in the conservation of the Eastern Region's two commercially important cranberry species.



Participants of the Crop Wild Relatives Plants Workshop.

For more information, see the [USDA Forest Service and Agricultural Research Service Strategy for the Complementary Conservation of Wild Cranberry \(*Vaccinium macrocarpon* Ait. and *V. oxycoccos*\) Genetic Resources and Protocols for Collecting Genetic Material, Germplasm, and Herbarium Vouchers.](#)