



# MEDIA RELEASE

TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
MARKET DEVELOPMENT DIVISION

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## **Tennessee Farms Are In the Black – And Blue and Red – For Berry Picking Time**

NASHVILLE – It's been a tough spring, but Tennessee's berry farmers are in the black – and blue and red – thanks to the rains that put other crops on hold. Recent wet months provided thirsty berry briars and canes just what they needed to make plenty of great big berries.

This works out well for both berry farmers, who now expect bumper crops this summer, and their customers, who are more interested than ever in finding local foods to harvest and store affordably. Berries are a recognized source of health benefits and are the easiest of foods to preserve successfully.

Tennessee has been a famous source of blackberries since it was settled, but nowadays, berries traditionally associated with other climes, like blueberries and raspberries, grow in well-tended rows on Tennessee farms alongside their native cousins. The result is that not only do berry lovers get more choices, but the berry season is considerably extended. Depending on the berry and the variety, visitors to local berry patches and farmers markets should be able to find berries from the last week in June and into August.

Dan and Debbie Eiser, who own Blueberries on the Buffalo Farm in Lawrenceburg, say that "The blueberry crop appears to be high quality, and we've been busy getting the farm ready for pick-your-own customers. Due to the cool, wet spring, we believe berries will start to ripen just a little later this season; we think we will open to the public beginning the week of June 22."

"Normally, blueberries will be available through July, and possibly to mid-August, depending on weather conditions," says Dan Eiser. "We offer pick-your-own blueberries as well as pre-picked, with advanced notice. We use no pesticides or herbicides on our berries."

The Eisers also offer pre-picked, native thorned blackberries by advanced order, "so we don't subject our customers to the thorns!" says Debbie Eiser. Their farm includes picnic

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areas, 1.5 miles of mowed walking paths, stocked fishponds where customers can feed the fish, and a scenic setting on the banks of the Buffalo River.

Bee Sweet Berry Farms owners, Judi and Ron Grennier, have 4 acres of blueberries and blackberries and a half acres of raspberries this year on their farm in Lewisburg.

“The blackberry bushes are loaded this year,” says Judi Grennier. “That’s good, because with the heath craze, we have seen an increase in people coming out to the farm for berries. People are more conscious of what they are eating, and want to know where it comes from.”

“Children love to come out to our farm and pick berries,” says Grennier. “It gives them an opportunity to enjoy being outdoors, and all kids love fruit. They seem to like to eat fruit better when it becomes an activity and they can pick it themselves.

“We joke around with the little ones that we are going to weigh them before and after they go picking to see how many berries they have eaten. They usually eat as many berries as they pick!”

Always call or e-mail ahead to verify hours, picking conditions and availability before making a trip to a farm. If berry picking is a family outing, it’s a good idea to bring something to drink, snacks, hats and sunscreen. Insect repellent might be good to bring along if weather has been rainy.

Berries do not ripen at all after picking, so pick only berries that are fully plump and pull free from the plant with barely a tug. Avoid placing picked berries in the sunlight any longer than necessary. Put picked berries in a shaded area other than inside a car, then cool them as soon as possible.

Find local pick-your-own berry farms, farmers markets, more recipes and more information about other Tennessee farm products at [www.PickTnProducts.org](http://www.PickTnProducts.org).

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