



MEDIA RELEASE

TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
MARKET DEVELOPMENT DIVISION

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**Audio Clip Attached*

BERRY PICKERS "WILD" OVER NEW DOMESTIC BLACKBERRIES

NASHVILLE, Tenn. – Once upon a time, brave souls donned their armor of long sleeves, long pants and bug repellent, charging into chigger-infested weeds to fight fierce, thorny briars which defended a glossy and tart-sweet treasure: blackberries.

No more. In a fairy-tale ending for blackberry lovers, domestic varieties of blackberries have literally taken root across Tennessee, and berry picking has become a pleasure. Since many farmers who sell at farmers markets are now growing domestic blackberries alongside their regular crops, one often doesn't need to go berry-picking at all: just show up at the local farmers market and pick up the pre-picked fruit.

Domestic blackberries are produced on thornless canes, allowing pickers to enjoy cool summer attire, wandering through neatly mowed rows of larger than life fruits. Unlike wild blackberries, which fend for themselves in fencerows and on hillsides across the state, domestic blackberries are often irrigated, making for exceptionally large and perfect berries.

"It's a lot easier picking our berries than doing it the old-timey way of thorns," says Janis Shirley of Mountain Mist Farms in Pigeon Forge. "Our berries are easy to pick with nicely mowed paths and thornless bushes."

Mountain Mist farms has four acres of blackberries divided into four different varieties, including Ouachita and Triple Crown which are ready to pick now. Their other berry varieties, Apache and Chester, will extend their season through September. Mountain Mist Farms also grows blueberries and raspberries. Contact the Sevier County farm by phone at 865-258-3276, or visit them online at www.tennesseemountainmistfarms.com.

Benton County's Leaning Cedar Farm, owned and operated by Ed Sanders in Holladay, says, "Blackberries are looking a lot better this year than last. The hot summer this year has made the berries mature earlier. We have 125 bushes of the Doyle variety, and if you come pick them yourself, you'll get a reduced price per gallon compared to a pre-picked gallon."

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Some things don't change, however, and Sanders reminds pickers they should still get prepared before visiting. "Be sure to wear a hat, use sunscreen, wear bug spray and bring some water to drink," says Sanders. Contact Sanders on the farm at 731-584-8022.

Heat and sun are hard on pickers, but they've been good for the state's blackberry crop. Mike Bradley, of Bradley Kountry Acres and Greenhouse in Cottontown, says, "We have an amazing crop of blackberries this year. You can pick your own or come get them already picked. We have peaches and other vegetables ready to pick, too, but children love to pick berries. Sometimes they eat more than they pick! We love to see whole families come out and make it a family tradition." Contact Bradley's Sumner County farm at 615-325-2836 or find them on the Web at www.bradleykountryacres.com.

Always call or e-mail ahead to verify hours, picking conditions and availability before making a trip to a farm. Berries do not ripen at all after picking, so pick only berries that are fully plump and pull free easily from the plant. 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, recipes and more information about Tennessee farm products at www.picktnproducts.org or by calling 615-837-5160. Follow Pick Tennessee Products at "Pick TN Products" on Facebook and at "PickTnProducts" on Twitter.

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