



## Cranberry (*Vaccinium oxycoccos*)



### Biodiversity Action Plan | Cummey Yannoo Beiyen-Feie

#### Background

A moorland plant of wet, acid conditions, that is rare on the Island.

This Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) has been reformatted from a Rare Species Action Plan, produced by Wildflowers of Mann in 2004, and approved by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry in the same year.

#### Description



Cranberry is a woody perennial sub-shrub of acid wetlands, particularly in *Sphagnum* bogs. A member of the heath family, the Cranberry is closely related to Bilberry and Cowberry.

This is a short plant, normally less than 10 cm tall, but spreading through *Sphagnum* via runners.

#### British Isles Distribution

Cranberry has a circumpolar distribution in northern Europe, Siberia, Greenland and North America. In all these sites, it is associated with open acid wetlands with *Sphagnum*. In more Arctic sites, the species can become very common. In the British Isles, it becomes less frequent in the east and south.

#### Isle of Man Distribution

Allen (1984) records one site for cranberry in the Isle of Man, near Slieau Managh. This population still exists, and has at least two plants protected from grazing by forestry fencing. Cranberry is an inconspicuous plant, and further undiscovered populations are likely to exist.

#### Habitat and Ecology

Cranberry lives in acid peat, down to a pH of <3. It can tolerate little competition, other than moss. Even here, it needs raised moss tussocks as its optimum habitat. On drier ground, it is vulnerable to fire damage due to limited rooting depth. As a light demanding species, it will not tolerate afforestation or scrubbing of its sites.

Small cyclamen like flowers appear in early-mid summer, followed by relatively large red berries that overwinter before becoming palatable. The berries will then be eaten, and the seeds dispersed, by birds. Cranberry does, however, mostly rely upon vegetative reproduction (via its woody runners) for most of its local spread. On the Isle of Man (and in most of Britain), successful seeding events can be considered rare (unlike its relative the Bilberry), with the populations maintaining themselves vegetatively for long periods.

The association of Cranberry with Christmas (or Thanksgiving in the USA) is an American tradition, inherited from the native cultures. The berries used, however, are commercially grown and a different, closely related American species. While the native Cranberry has all the same culinary properties, the berries tend to be produced in small quantities, making their collection somewhat unrewarding.



Legal protection		
Listed on Schedule 7 of the Wildlife Act 1990 and red-listed under <i>Plants of Conservation Concern in the Isle of Man 2022</i> .		
Threats		
<p>As a northern species, the Cranberry is likely to be at some risk in the event of global warming, as some of its wetland habitats could be at risk from drying out and wildfire. The warmer climate should not otherwise effect Cranberry, as it can found on suitable habitat as far south as France.</p> <p>Cranberry has probably undergone a large reduction on the Island in historical times, due to cutting peat for fuel and ash, as well as moor burning. With its poor ability to seed into new sites, it has been less able to colonise suitable sites once peat cutting stops.</p>		
Reason for BAP		
A critically restricted plant, at risk from extinction (i.e. due to wildfire or scrub encroachment).		
Aims		
The goal for this plant is to establish Cranberry on at least three new sites, with at least twenty individuals in total.		
Linked BAPS		
Delivery Options	Active	Challenges
Possible receptor sites include Dalby Mountain Nature Reserve and the south base of South Barrule.		So long as the receptor sites are suitably large and wet, occasional fire events should not kill this species - fire should bypass <i>Sphagnum</i> .
Delivery Plan		
Strategy		Lead
<p>It is very likely that they come from only a few clones.</p> <p>There are many small acid <i>Sphagnum</i> wetlands on the Island, mostly owned by the Government, Manx National Heritage or Manx Wildlife Trust, so finding three suitable sites should be relatively easy.</p> <p>Once vegetative material has been collected, it may take time to grow this species to twenty healthy individuals. If any berries are found, these will be collected and sown. Some plants will be maintained in cultivation, as a backup.</p>		Manx Wildlife Trust
Action	Timing	Responsibility
Find source plants.	Summer 2005	Wildflowers of Mann, Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
Collect popular stock.	Summer 2005	Wildflowers of Mann
Grow on/divide stock.	Spring 2006-10	Wildflowers of Mann
Identify receptor sites.	Summer 2010	Wildflowers of Mann, Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry



Plant out.	Autumn 2010	Wildflowers of Mann
Monitor.	Summer >2011	Wildflowers of Mann
Review.	Summer 2012	Wildflowers of Mann, Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
<b>Annual Updates</b>		
<b>Year</b>		
2005	Plants collected and cultivated from Slieau Managh.	
2006	Permission gained to introduce to Dalby Mountain Fields.	
2007	Plants introduced to Dalby Mountain. However, at time of introduction, a very large existing population was found.  Nursery propagation was ceased. Project now 'monitor only', unless very suitable new site is found.	
2022	Small Cranberry population discovered on Mullagh Ouyr by S. Hickey, which would benefit from grazing protection.	

