

## **GOING ORGANIC FOR CRANBERRIES**

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Taken at Big Rapids, Michigan

Wild Cranberry Bog

Hunting starts around here in a couple of days, so those of us who are not hunters are trying to soak up as much outdoor time in the fields and woods as we can, at least if the sun is shining. The hunters are already caravanning into the area, setting up tents, hauling in coolers full or beer (and what-not), and getting ready for the big hunt and a really big party. Need I say that we don't walk our dog (or ourselves) in the wilds during hunting season!

One thing that Margaret (my wife) wanted to do before the curtain of hunting comes down is get out into the bog areas and pick wild cranberries, so we did that yesterday (Friday) afternoon. We went to a leatherleaf bog about fifteen miles from where we live, a vast area of sphagnum moss that is springy as you walk on it. One of the first plants to come into a bog once sphagnum moss takes over is the leatherleaf, which are actually quite a beautiful plant. So this bog was carpeted with sphagnum moss, covered with leatherleaf and Tamarack trees, with wild cranberry plants interleaved among the leatherleaf.

There was no question that these were organic cranberries, because there was nothing within miles of where we were. Well, almost nothing. We did see a few hunters backpacking their tents in, crossbows in hand. Bow season is going on now, but there is less danger of being shot by the odd archer than by the swarms of rifles and beers soon to be here.

I am not a berry picker, so I busied myself taking these pictures, which is what I like to do. But I did have some interesting moments looking across the bog at Margaret bent over picking cranberries. It could have been hundreds of years ago, and she a Native American squaw, with me a hunter of food rather than photos. It was almost eerie in its beauty.

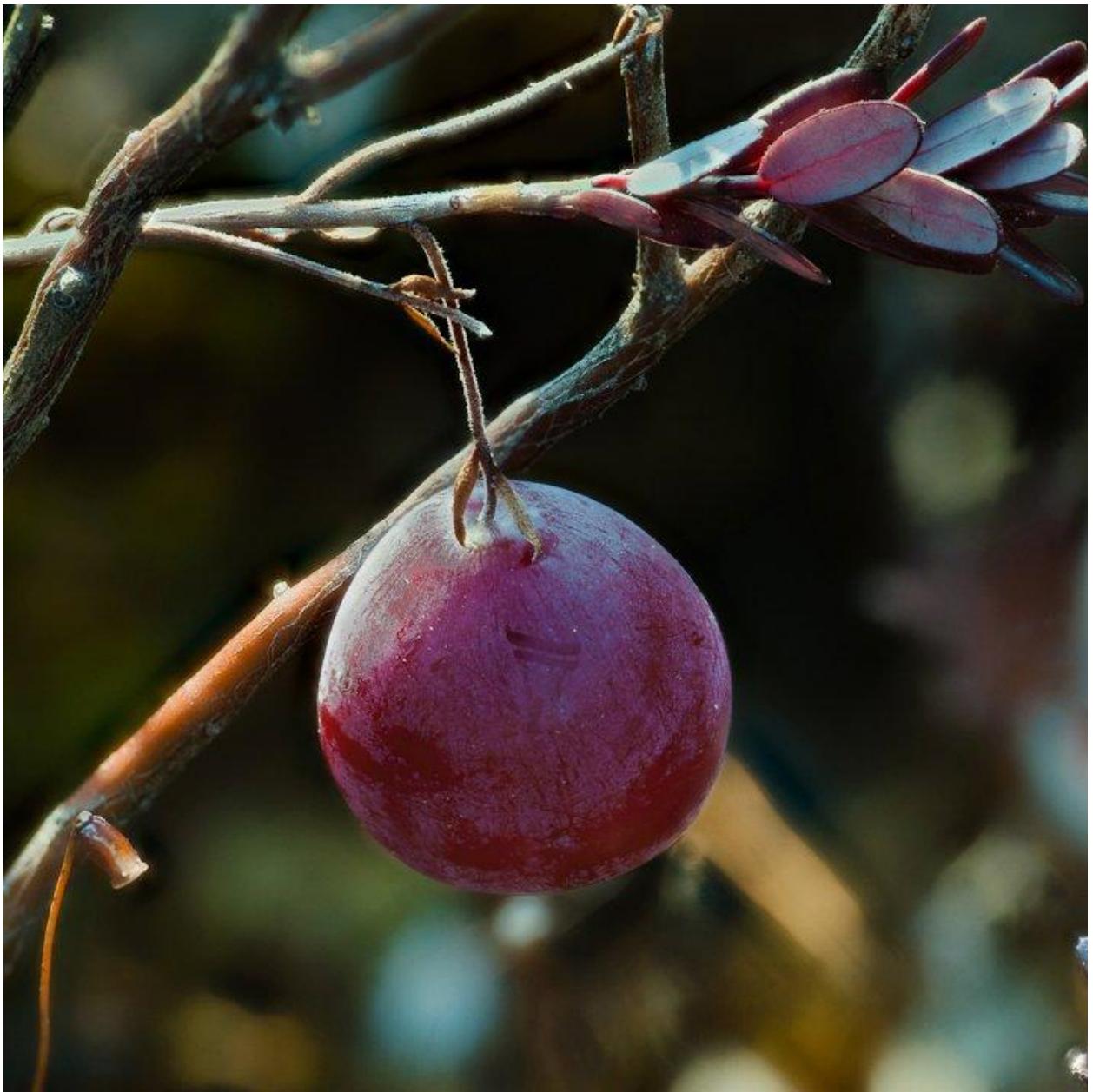
Anyway, we were out there and I include a photo of some of the cranberries we brought back. Hope they last until Thanksgiving!



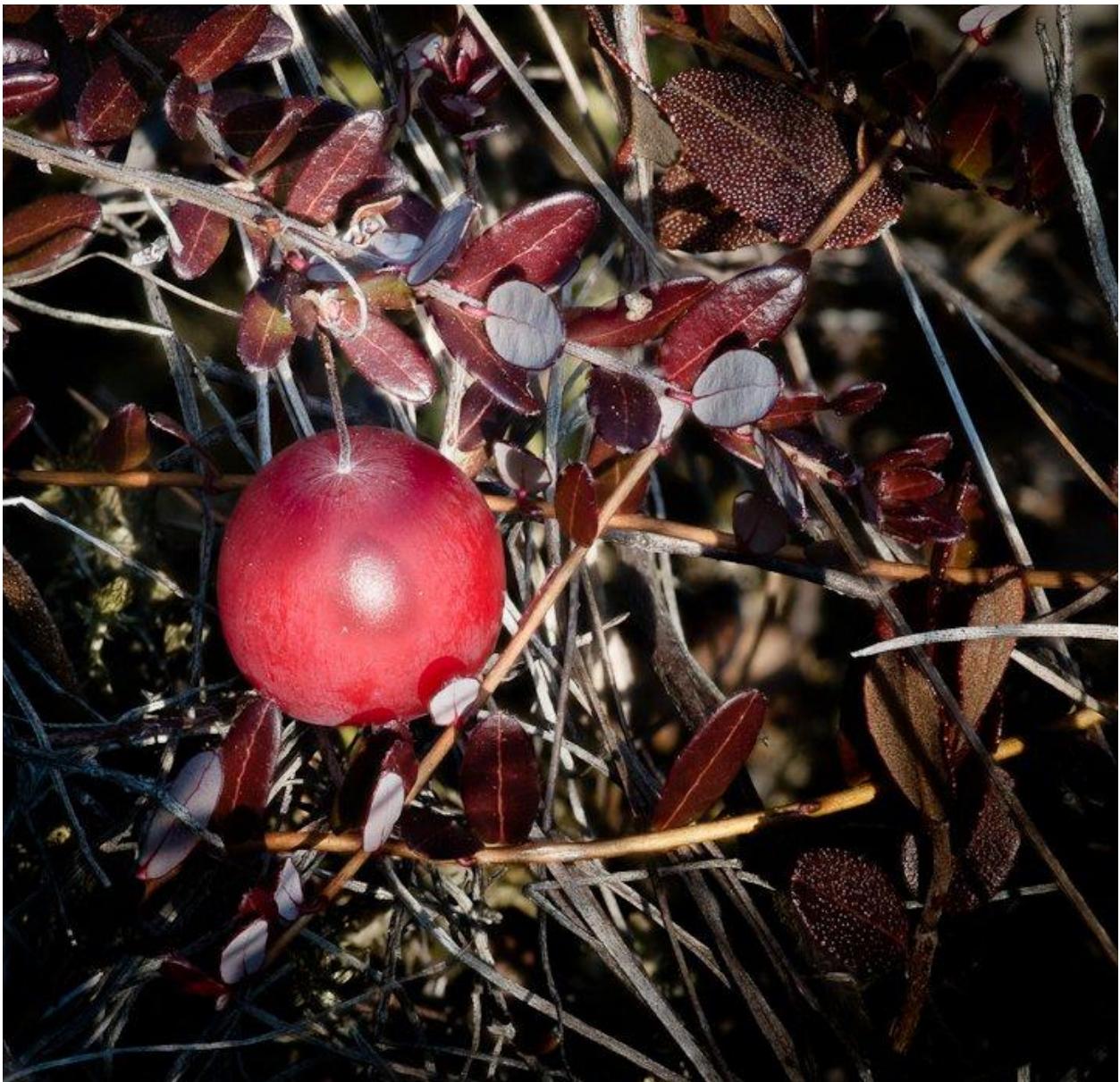
Sphagnum moss.



The leatherleaf leaves.



This is what we were looking for.



A wild cranberry and its leaves.



Sphagnum moss is literally everywhere. Walking on it is like walking on a mattress.



The leatherleaf bog stretches for miles and, as you can see, is really very lovely to look at in the late afternoon sun.



Here are some of the wild cranberries that Margaret picked.