



# BRUNSWICK-TOPSHAM LANDTRUST

## Crystal Spring Farm's Unique Blueberry Habitat

The Brunswick-Topsham Land Trust's Crystal Spring Farm is home to a rare natural community, called the "Little Bluestem - Blueberry Sandplain Grassland." This area is where the blueberries you are sampling today grow wild.

Once common along the northeastern coast, development and changing land uses has all but eliminated this unique biome. The Maine Natural Areas Program lists this habitat as "critically imperiled."

The unique habitat is a product of geologic history and human actions. The sand and gravel deposited by melting glaciers at the end of the last ice age created soil here that does not hold water well and contains few nutrients. Sandplains are also highly fire-prone and have been maintained by fire for thousands of years, probably most often intentionally by humans: both Native Americans and European settlers used fire deliberately as a way to promote blueberry production. Together fire and soil constraints limit what species can grow here.

Poverty oatgrass, little bluestem, woodland sedge, northern blazing star, and blueberry are all plants highly adapted to this place. The community provides nesting habitat for several rare, ground nesting, grassland birds including



Grasshopper Sparrow

the grasshopper sparrow and upland sandpiper, and habitat for a rare snake, the northern black racer.

Without fire, this habitat is in danger of disappearing from the land along with the robust blueberry production. To that end, the Brunswick-Topsham Land Trust works with the local fire department and Maine Forest Service to undertake periodic prescribed burns of the sandplain.