

ACORN Berry Network Newsletter
Issue 2 – January 2010



Welcome to the second ACORN Organic Berry Network e-newsletter!

The Organic Berry Network is a three-year project that was started in the Fall of 2008, thanks to funding from the New Brunswick Agricultural Council, PEI ADAPT Council, and Agriculture & Agri-Food Canada. The goal of the Network is to assist the organic industry in Atlantic Canada to access information on organic marketing, production and research, as well as new market opportunities. Past presentations and berry network news are posted on the Organic Berry Network website:
<http://www.acornorganic.org/berry.html>.

In this issue:

- **Research, Innovation & New Markets:** Health benefits of bramble fruit; Maine elderberries as nutraceuticals; Ocean Spray to develop large cranberry farm in New Brunswick
- **Events:** mark your calendars for upcoming events
- **Classifieds:** for berry producers needs and wants
- **Online Resources:** a collection of useful websites that may be of interest to you

Research, Innovation & New Markets:

Health Benefits of Bramble Fruit (excerpt from
<http://www.raspberrylblackberry.com/local.cfm?doc=webdocs%2Fhealthbasics.htm>)

Raspberries and blackberries are high in Vitamin C, which prevents scurvy, reduces risk of stroke, and helps prevent cancer initiation. They are good sources of Folate, which is an especially important nutrient for pregnant women, since it helps prevent neural tube (spinal column) defects. It may also help prevent heart disease. They are cholesterol free and virtually fat free. They are sources of dietary fiber that lowers cholesterol and may help prevent colon cancer and heart disease...But that's not all. Raspberries and blackberries have been shown to contain healthful substances which research shows may slow down the aging process, boost immunity, and protect against chronic disease, including heart disease and cancer.

An increasing number of studies link various foods--especially berries and other intensely colored fruits and vegetables such as strawberries, blueberries, and carrots--with improved health and disease prevention. Some of the healthful, bioactive substances in these foods appear to be the pigments that give them their bright colors. Others are flavor compounds, such as those that give an astringent taste to the seeds.

For example, anthocyanin, which gives berries their red color, is an antioxidant that scavenges free radicals, which may cause aging of cells. Researchers are currently linking anthocyanin activity to improving vision, controlling diabetes, improving circulation, preventing cancer and heart disease, and retarding the effects of aging, particularly loss of memory and motor skills. Ellagic acid, a phenolic compound found in berries, has exhibited anti-carcinogenic effects against a wide range of carcinogens in several tissues. And ellagic acid has been shown, in studies with rats and mice, to contribute to significant inhibition of colon, esophageal, liver, lung, tongue, and skin cancers.

Why not just take a nutritional supplement?

When it comes to nutrition, no one has been able to outsmart Mother Nature. Research shows that it is a combination of phytochemicals working together with the berry's fiber, vitamins, and minerals which make it so effective. For example, the combination of anthocyanins, Vitamin C, and ellagic acid can act together, contributing to berries' high ORAC (Oxygen Radical Absorbance Capacity) value, a measure of antioxidant effectiveness. Antioxidants are shown to work best when combined; the presence of fiber, and other plant compounds enhance the health benefit. Scientists have also found that raspberries and blackberries may have cancer-fighting properties, but cannot attribute them to only one component. For these reasons, a nutraceutical source -- a food with health properties-- is a more viable antioxidant option than a dietary supplement. And a lot tastier!

From Elderberries to a Nutraceutical Cluster of Fruits and Farmers

by Rebecca Goldfine

Edie Johnston is the kind of entrepreneur who doesn't just focus on one idea. Instead, she's cultivating several visions at once: a farm, a fruit revival, a medical breakthrough and a revitalized economy. But at the center of all Johnston's plans lies the same object: a small, dark-purple elderberry. Johnston, the owner and founder of Eldertide Pharm and Maine Medicinals in Dresden, is developing medicinal products from organic elderberries and other high-antioxidant berries. She believes elderberries could be the next fruit to dazzle the market, somewhat like açai or pomegranate, two fruits so nutritious they are part of an emerging niche of healthful foods dubbed superfruits. These "superfruits" are being used to make many products, including herbal supplements and nutraceuticals, or plant-based medicines.

For full article see:

<http://www.mofga.org/Publications/MaineOrganicFarmerGardener/Winter20092010/Elderberries/tabid/1378/Default.aspx>

For more information on elderberries, visit the website of the **North American Elderberry Alliance**: <http://www.elderberryalliance.org/>

OceanSpray Moving Forward on \$90 Million Cranberry Farm in Rogersville, NB

Mayor Bertrand LeBlanc admits the more he thinks about what the presence of cranberry giant Ocean Spray will mean to his community, the more excited he gets. Earlier this year, Ocean Spray announced it had selected Lake Despres, near Rogersville, as the site of a \$90-million project that will become North America's largest cranberry farm with 1,900 acres of cranberry beds planted on an 8,400 acre swath of rich, sandy land. Mike Stamatakos, Ocean Spray's vice-president of agricultural supply and development talks about this development in a recent Times Transcript article.

For full article see: <http://timestranscript.canadaeast.com/search/article/836019>

Upcoming Events:

January 28-31st, 2010 – *Our Organic Identity*, the 29th Annual Guelph Organic Conference, Expo and Tasting Fair at the University of Guelph in Ontario.
<http://www.guelphorganicconf.ca/>

February 23-24th, 2010 – Ontario Berry Growers 2-day session as part of the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Convention (February 24 & 25th, 2010). Brock University, St. Catharines, Ontario. <http://www.ofvc.ca/berrygrowers.html>

February 24-26th, 2010 – North American Raspberry & Blackberry Conference in Monterey, California:
<http://www.raspberryblackberry.com/local.cfm?doc=webdocs/2010ConferencePreview.htm>

March 4th, 2010 – Organic Berry Symposium at the Rodd Charlottetown, PEI. In conjunction with the ACORN's 10th annual conference, *Celebrating a Decade of Growth* (March 5 & 6th): <http://acornorganic.org/confprogram.html>

Berry symposium speakers are:

Back by popular demand, is David Handley, Vegetable and Small Fruit Specialist and a Cooperating Professor of Horticulture for the University of Maine. Dr. Handley spoke at the Berry Network's workshop in Memramcook, NB, in March 2009, and received tremendous praise for his technical information. At the up-coming Berry Symposium, Dr. Handley will present two workshops: Highbush Blueberries and Raspberry/Blackberry production.

Bio: Dr. Handley received a Bachelor's degree from the University of Massachusetts, and his Masters and Ph.D. degrees from the University of New Hampshire. He has been based at Highmoor Farm in Monmouth, Maine since 1983, where he carries out applied research regarding berry and vegetable variety evaluation, production techniques and pest management strategies. He coordinates statewide integrated pest management (IPM) programs for strawberries and sweet corn. Dr. Handley is the author of numerous extension fact sheets, articles and newsletters, and co-editor of two regional small fruit production guides.

Dr. David Yarborough comes highly recommended as an excellent low bush blueberry researcher. During the Berry Symposium, Dr. Yarborough will address weed and pest strategies for this perennial berry.

Bio: David Yarborough is Professor of Horticulture and Extension Blueberry Specialist at the University of Maine where he has been employed the last 30 years. Seventy percent of his appointment is Extension or educational outreach where he brings the results of research based knowledge to wild blueberry growers in Maine, Atlantic Canada and Quebec. His 30 percent research appointment is in weed science where he develops chemical and cultural methods to reduce weed competition and to improve productivity to allow the wild blueberry industry to remain competitive in the world marketplace. He was an investigator in a recently completed USDA/CSREES Organic Transitions Program for a project entitled, "Development and Implementation of Organic Pest Management Strategies for Lowbush Blueberries: A Multi-Year, Multi-Disciplinary Study" which provided specific information on how to improve organic wild blueberry production.

We are very pleased to have Ken Taylor at the up-coming Berry Symposium. Ken Taylor is an organic farmer and nursery operator for cold weather berries and fruit, who will identify several new varieties that are appropriate to our region.

Bio: Ken and Lorraine Taylor have invested over 25 years in the study of organic and cold weather farming with their farm, Windmill Point, just outside Montreal. Their years of experience and experimentation have made them the foremost authorities when it comes to hardy fruit trees and plants. The Green Barn Nursery is the nursery division of the farm, where all tree and plant stock is grown with the strictest of organic principles. Find out more at www.greenbarnnursery.ca

Registration for the full day Berry Symposium is \$65. This includes lunch if booked and paid for by February 4th, 2010. This event is sponsored in part by the PEI ADAPT Council, New Brunswick Agricultural Council, and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada.

Classifieds:

To facilitate the exchange of information and resources, the e-newsletter will also feature a classifieds section. To send in announcements, items for sale, wanted items, etc. for the next newsletter, please e-mail admin@acornorganic.org.

Current Listings:

- I am from Ontario and looking for a source of certified organic raspberry plants in any form (cane, bare root, sprouts) within Canada. I am hoping for Everlasting or similar, 500 plants to start. Please contact Gerry Stephenson of Drumlin Farm at drumlinfarm@xplornet.ca

Online Resources:

Ontario Berry Growers Association: <http://www.ontarioberries.com/index.htm>

Strawberry production:

- University of Maine extension strawberry guide (includes organic production practices and variety recommendations for Northern New England): <http://www.umext.maine.edu/onlinepubs/htmpubs/2067.htm>
- ‘Growing Organic Strawberries’ - summarized from a presentation to the North American Strawberry Growers Association, Savannah, Ga., January, 2006: <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/crops/hort/news/allontario/ao0206a1.htm>
- North Carolina Strawberry Growers Portal: <http://www.ncsu.edu/enterprises/strawberries>

Bramble production:

- North Carolina Blackberry & Raspberry Growers Information Portal: <http://ncsu.edu/enterprises/blackberries-raspberries>
- North American Raspberry and Blackberry Association: <http://www.raspberryblackberry.com/>

And of course, have a look at the wealth of information available in the [Organic Path](#) and [Grower Database](#) sections of the ACORN website (www.acornorganic.org/index.html)

If anyone you know would like to sign up for future issues of ACORN’s Organic Berry Network e-newsletter, please have them send an e-mail to admin@acornorganic.org.