

**Workshop Title:**

Establishing Haskap Orchards

**Speakers:**

Andy Hammermeister

**Executive Summary:**

The session covered the impressions of establishing haskap orchards by a few farmers.

The session emphasized the importance of choosing the right site along with site preparations, as this will have a huge role on the profitability of a haskap orchard.

**Main Notes:**

*Session begins with Andy*

Orchards take 3-5 years to establish and the establishing cost ranges from \$10-20 thousand/acre.

*Cultivars*

- Selecting cultivars: looking at shape of the bush, flavor, health characteristics, uniform of ripening, resistance to handling (hardy), disease resistance.
- Limited research on yield within the region.
- Often limited by varieties and cost

*Study Case*

- Site outside Truro
- Really fertile grounds/location
- Measured yield and how many berries were dropped in July. (2.5 lbs./plant yield compared to a common 1.5 lbs./plant)

- Important to harvest when they are ripe, not just when they are blue.
- Rainfall will increase size but decrease flavor. Need to find balance

Need to take time to choose and prepare a site. Many factors play a key role in later yields. Need to plan weed management, drainage, soil fertility management (compaction, pH, organic matter content), beds, and time of planting.

Research in assessing fertility status in different orchards: Looking at bush size and leaf size. Limited yield data. Trying to determine adequate level of fertility-research ongoing. -More complex than Nitrogen and Potassium content

Weed management practices: Need to assess weed pressure. This determines long-term weed management strategies. Need to think of weed management and irrigation before you establish an orchard. Ecological planning doesn't always correlate with higher yields. Many options for tilling- can use vegetable tilling methods for orchards. Need to be careful (till shallow) so it doesn't destroy root system. Organic herbicides may be an option. Shielded burns can also be used with caution. Black plastic can be used unless animals frequent the orchards (deer, dogs). Black plastic also warms the soil and plants-Haskap doesn't really care for plastic but plastic with irrigation underneath is promising despite that there haven't been trials. Mulches are another option that can be beneficial but it may cause a nitrogen shortage. Certain mulches can be costly as well. Need to control weeds before applying mulch. Need to use organic approved plastics.

Lots of powdery mildew in orchards this year despite dry season. Drought stress may cause this. This will lower yield for the next season. Trimmer disease is also a concern. Damaging the bark when mowing can have a huge negative effect. Nets are needed to prevent birds from lowering yields.

*Don speaks (A haskap farmer in PEI)*

Working with haskaps for the past 10 years in PEI. Has about 10 000 new-breeding clones. Have 2100 plants per acre with row spacing of 7-8 feet. High-density orchard. Haskap has the potential to do very well in Atlantic Canada. In order to make haskap more practical, we need to profile the input costs and put together a cost proposal. Site selection: the better the site the better the results

Haskap has been documented to grow in colder climates. Ideally suited for the Maritimes. The selection of the variety is a critical thing before you plant hundreds in establishing an orchard. Once you plant them you are stuck with them. Replanting is expensive, similar to apple orchards. Don works with Indigo Gem. It has good yields and taste. He uses bumblebees to pollinate and found that they are better than honeybees. He even experiences bee colonization in his orchards.

Orchards can become diseased when planted near high bush or low bush blueberries. Bird control is the most expensive issue. Bird nets don't always work but they are the most effective. Other bird control methods have included bird whistles and movement.

Pruning: An increase in foliage and yield after pruning. Improvements in size, shape, sugar content, position of fruit, and increased maturity.

Post harvesting: Harvesting in the heat of the summer results in a need to process fast or else the berries turn to mush. Currently looking for better varieties to withstand the heat once picked. Many new varieties of haskap are soon to be available. The future is great but be careful in your planning in order to be successful.

*Rachel speaks*

Strategic pruning is needed based on the variety for best results. This will help with disease and berry profile—also better for u-pick operations. Still unclear which fertility is best – limited research. Lots of people in different places are working on this. Irrigation is needed for summers like this one past. Irrigation is expensive but it can save your orchard. Drip irrigation is recommended with black plastic. Need really good site location in order to do well – cheap land is cheap for a reason.