

Berries and Beyond with Ken Taylor

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Ken learned a lot of non-profitable farming from his father's conventional farm...

Philosophy: Embraces organic and looks beyond – zero interference (trees going wild, growing on their own), spends time on plant genetics (key to everything they do), so that there is less work and more money. Innovation is key, and he uses permaculture design and principles and uses plasticulture to cut down on labour and interference

Using plastic: never looked back after trying it – convinced by friend after being against it. Uses tree plastic – saves time and labour, reduces disease vectors, uses for strawberries, captures spring heat, retains water, doesn't use irrigation anymore, ploughs down green manure in between rows for most fertilization.

Propagates fruit trees - Looks for high fresh market value. Found for pear 90% marketable - Lots at value per acre, not just per tree.

For most berries it takes awhile to pick. Ken looks for early season, high value-added potential, high ORAC scores, aware of health benefits for consumers, colours, plants that aren't addicted to a certain soil (ones that can take heavy clay, poor soil). Examples: Seaberries, mulberries

Seedless grapes (counted them as berries for the sake of mentioning them in the presentation) – Canadians spend \$360 million a year, imported, \$ getting higher every year \$6.99/lb

Most of green and red seedless come from California – time is ripe to think about growing them in Canada. His grapes – never been sprayed, fertilized, very good for disease resistance, brix were the same last summer as other summers (reached 20 brix) despite wet weather

Can dry or semi-dry seedless grapes too – or make juice, lots of potential for processing (like pies...)

Haskap more traditional – edible honeysuckle, from the University of Saskatchewan, Japanese people love them, heavily promoted in the west. Hardy bush – looks like forsythia, does well in shade although maybe better than full sun, ripens early in June, earlier than strawberries, birds love them, no disease or pest problems, can take high winds and dry sandy areas, thinks they can take -45C, taste a bit like blueberries. Borealis is a good variety, need 2 varieties for vigour,

Zero interference doesn't work well for raspberries – best was early black raspberry – should consider them, they'll keep in fruit for 3-4 weeks, very productive, better yields than red raspberries, berries sweet, firm, black higher in anti-oxidants than any other colour (potential for health market)

Seaberry – good for processing (oil, juice, etc.) china produces 99% of supply, doesn't need pesticides, don't need to pick fruit at certain time – won't fall if not picked, harvest by cutting off branch and freeze, then tap off berries. Pineapple citrus flavour not so sweet, more sour, Has 15 % sugar in some, has increased size of berries through breeding selection, organic oil from seeds is most expensive in world could replace olive oil, fruit soft and juicy, has one edible seed, ORAC (oxygen radical adsorption capacity) higher than blueberries, thinks it's ideal for sandy soil, salt spray, can take -50C (grow in Russia), pretty plant. Varieties: Cascade, Igor (male) – add for every 9-10 females

Bush cherries – very hardy (zone 3), fresh or processed, disease resistant, adaptable to variety of soils, harvest July-August, developed at University of Saskatchewan (mongolia x morello cherries), brix can be >20%. Bush can be different layer of or 'guild' between trees (permaculture term). Birds won't touch Nanking cherry – very resistant to disease, good as a hedge (very popular item at the Green Barn nursery).

Currants: Black, white, red, golden, pink, Demand is high for currants – good time, best varieties from Scotland, Titania is good. Clobber spice currant has intoxicating smell, very aromatic. Maple black is black-coloured, but has flavour of golden

Gooseberries – store very well, do well under plasticulture, not recommended for commercial use because of thorns...looking for thornless varieties

Chums – cherry plums – red to dark purple, really hardy zone 2 – takes zero interference, loves sandy poor soil, tolerates drought, bears fruit 1 year after planting, tend to over-produce, the branches weep down loaded with fruit, easily pollinated, need 2 varieties, 2 favourites are Manor and Kappa (red and yellow)

Kiwi – kolo, krupno, bi-sex – very vigourous, shade tolerant, shade tolerant zone 2, good for northern climates...sold as kiwi grapes in Loblaws this summer – fruit sweeter and less acid than regular kiwis, grows them were nothing else will grow, have to make sure male is around, 1 male to 10 females

Mulberry – berry tree...berries start in June, fragile, super sweet, juicy, good fresh or processed, birds love them – good trap crop for birds, deer, raccoons

Cherry olive – fixes nitrogen, ORAC – higher than seaberrys, hang on bushes late in the season

Strawberries 'Sparkle' best seller, new variety, day neutral 'albion' best variety

Blueberries – use plasticulture, variety 'patriot' (huge berries) – didn't spend a lot of time on blueberries since other talks focus on them and they are so popular already...

Hazelnut - Windbreak for berries, especially for blueberries. Give more profit than blueberries they're trying to protect