



BRAMBLE

VOLUME 21, ISSUE 1
SPRING, 2005

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE NORTH AMERICAN BRAMBLE GROWERS ASSOCIATION, INC.

NABG Research Foundation Makes 2005 Grants

At its meeting on February 16th, 2005, the board of the North American Bramble Growers Research Foundation (NABG-RF) was pleased to authorize four grants to bramble research for a total of \$7385.62. The Foundation had received ten proposals for a total request of over \$27,000.

The IR-4 Project, a federal program that supports pesticide-related research in minor crops, received \$3000. IR-4 had offered to fully fund three pesticide-related proposals we received if we provided this amount of funding. For our \$3000 investment, \$7787.84 of bramble research will now be fully funded, and we hope this beneficial relationship will continue in future years. The projects that will be funded through the IR-4 Project are :

Establishment of 'Apache' and 'Chickasaw' Blackberries, Monitoring, Detection, and Prevention of Raspberry Crown Borer (Frank Matta, Edward Heard, Mississippi State University) \$2,787.84.

Weed Management Evaluation in Established Brambles (Katie Jennings, David Monks, NC State University) \$2,000.

Cultural Strategies and Organic Fungicides for Managing Gray Mold on Raspberries (Elsa Sanchez, Kathleen Demchak, Pennsylvania State University) \$3,000.

The NABG-RF also funded three individual proposals:

Impact and Management of Strawberry Bud Weevil on Raspberry (David Handley, James Dill, Renae Moran, University of Maine) \$1785.62.

Development of a Simple System for Blackberry Shelf Life Evaluation (Penelope Perkins-Veazie, USDA-ARS; John Clark, University of Arkansas) \$1,600.



Lynn Moore pours a sample of blackberry juice for Debbie Lineberger at the 2005 Taste of the Berry Fields.

Predicting Flowering Time of Blackberry (Brent Black, Fumiomi Takeda, USDA-ARS) \$1000.

We are planning to fund an additional project using NABGA's general funds, since it is not a research project. This project, **A Rapid Distribution Network for Caneberry Pesticide Updates and Production Tips** (Doug Pfeiffer, Anthony Bratsch, and Jerry Williams,

Virginia Tech) will develop a list-serve and website to disseminate information on new pesticide registrations, changes in product status, general production information, and more. It will be a very useful for NABGA members and a good adjunct to our upcoming website. ✿

See page 10 for a report on one of the projects funded in 2004 and page 11 for the financial report of the foundation.

Sources of Research Funding

Funds for the NABG-Research Foundation come from several sources. A major source is the 25% "tithe" of each grower's dues. This amounts to \$18.75 per member, but has traditionally been increased to \$25 per membership, as the Council voted to again this year. Our "Taste of the Berry Fields" is a fundraiser for the Foundation (see page 4). Individual members also make donations. Members who have made donations during the past year (3/04-3/05) include Mark Ciotoli, Patricia DiVello, Bill Hamilton, Ann & Charles Geyer, Richard & Susan Lynn, Kristine Naess, Charlie O'Dell, William Rosby, and Henry & Sandi Rose. We are especially grateful to Driscoll Associates, which has donated \$2000 or more to NABG-RF each of the last several years, and are pleased to welcome SunnyRidge Farm as a new industry supporter of the Foundation. Thank you all!

All these donations are much appreciated. As a small, specialty crop industry, we have to take much of the responsibility for encouraging research on our crops. And, as was pointed out in the last issue of the *Bramble*, NABGA's support, even when modest, can have a very strong multiplier effect.

All donations to the NABG-RF are tax-deductible. Please make checks out to NABG-RF. Donations included in membership checks to NABGA are simply transferred to the Foundation.

Conference Report

Close to 200 people attended the North American Berry Conference in Nashville, Tennessee, our combined annual conference with the North American Strawberry Growers Association. Thanks to the hard work of the joint organizing committee and the dedicated and very professional management group of NASGA, the conference ran very smoothly. Thank you, NASGA!

Brambles turned out to be the “party favors” of the conference: One of our members, Tom Doyle, arranged to have each party of attendees receive a neatly packaged sample of his nursery’s Doyle thornless blackberry as they registered. Bramble nurseries were also well represented among exhibitors, with Jones Farms, Nourse Farm, and Indiana Berry all attending.

Bramble sessions were very well attended – the room was almost always packed. Commented presenter Marvin Pritts, “I was surprised by the number of experienced growers who attended the ‘ABC’s of Growing’ workshop. Later

one of them told me that something like that should be offered each year as a ‘refresher’ because even the experienced growers could use a review every couple of years – even if just to ensure themselves that they are on the right track.” Members who did not attend will be pleased to find a detailed article in the Proceedings for that session.

Our “Bramble Grower Showcase” speakers, Gretchen and Dan Copeland, did a great job speaking to the whole group in the general session and in several breakout sessions. Their idea of using “Kiwi clips” to fasten their canes to the wires especially caught listeners’ attention and their smart and successful marketing is an inspiration. See the article on their farm on page 6.

A freelance reporter working for produce industry newspaper *The Packer* attended the conference, interested in finding out about trends in both the strawberry and bramble industries and in how small consumer-oriented farms related to the larger wholesale industry. He subsequently wrote two articles in *The Packer* on the conference, one reporting conversations with Ervin Lineberger about the importance of larger container sizes to building the bramble industry, and one on strawberry grower efforts to increase consumer berry consumption.

NABGA’s “Taste of the Berry Fields” was successful both as fundraiser and social event (see page 4). And Nashville proved a fine place to socialize with old and new friends – if berry growers didn’t dance on the tables, they definitely did dance!✿

Introducing Our New Regional Representatives

Dena Fiacchino (Region 3) became interested in plant science and agriculture when she moved as a teenager from the Chicago area to more rural Southern Illinois. After obtaining a BS in Horticulture, she worked on several commodities at the Horticulture Research Center at Southern Illinois University and began a masters program, conducting field research on fruit crops. After obtaining her MS in plant and soil science, she moved to New York state, planning to work on a Ph.D. in horticulture at Cornell and begin a career in the plant and agricultural field. She is currently employed as a tree fruit and small fruit specialist for Cornell. Dena writes, “My primary focus personally is with the small fruit industry, trying to develop new, scientific applications to maximize yields and improve fruit quality. As a professional as well as a small fruit enthusiast, I hope to encourage and develop a more diverse population of small fruit growers in New York.”

Stanley Scarborough (Region 5) is Production Manager for SunnyRidge Farm in Winter Haven, FL. He has been operating their Georgia farm since 1994, and lives in between the two locations. The farm has 200 acres of blueberries and added blackberries four years ago. Three years ago, they became a test site for Arkansas blackberry breeder John Clark. Stanley is also a director of the Georgia Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association.

Carlos Fear (at-large member) has been working with bramble research for about 16 years, first with Sweetbriar Development, and for the last five years at Driscoll Associates, where he is Director of Blackberry and Raspberry Research. He has been a member of NABGA since 1990 and also serves as a member of NABGA’s Research Committee. His interests include helping to promote more bramble research to help growers produce better fruit and solve production problems.

Thank you, Sponsors of the North American Berry Conference

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The Bramble © NABGA 2005

2005 NABGA Annual Meeting Report

New Officers

The Executive Council has elected its officers for 2005. Ervin Lineberger, who had been serving as Vice President, stepped into the President's job. Tom Walters, Region 8 representative, became our new Vice President.

Regions Redefined

To reflect the growth of the blackberry industry in the South and current distribution of membership, the recent annual meeting approved a redefinition of our eight regions, a change recommended by the Executive Council. Old Region 3 (MI & NY) was combined with Region 4 (NJ, PA, Europe, South Africa), to make a new Region 3. Old Region 5 was renamed as Region 4. New Region 5 is now made up of the Deep South states that were in Region 7 (AL, GA, FL, LA, MS, & TX). Region 6 is unchanged. Region 7 now contains NC, SC, VA, & DC. Region 8 (western states) is unchanged. And a new "At-Large" position on the Council has been created. As the organization grows and changes, these regions may again need readjustment; for example, Region 6 is currently quite large.

Contact information and for all Council members and the states in each region are listed on the back page of the newsletter.

Election of Regional Representatives

Three new regional representatives were elected to the NABGA Executive Council. To right are a few brief comments supplied by each of them. Please note that we still have one vacant position on the Executive Council: Region 1 (Canada). If you are interested in serving, please contact the NABGA office or NABGA President Ervin Lineberger. Many thanks to those Council members stepping down this year: Kristine Naess, Larry Krieger, and Mark Ciotoli.

Budget Approved

NABGA's budget for FY 2005 was

Briefly Speaking...

NABGA Goals for 2005

During the annual meeting of the NABGA members at the recent Berry Conference in Nashville, discussions led to the adoption of three areas of need for the organization to work on. These are:

1. Improved communications among all associated with the bramble industry and easier accessibility by interested individuals to the educational programs of the organization.
2. Promotion of blackberries and raspberries to the consuming public.
3. A unified voice to represent the bramble industry.

The areas of need will be addressed by action projects having specific measurable objectives and goals. Some projects may target a single area of need, while others will incorporate two or three. Overall, our expectation is to be more successful in accomplishing the purpose of NABGA as stated in the Bylaws.

Your Executive Council is already working towards these goals. For example, we are exploring the possibility of holding several regional meetings in 2006 in the Pacific Northwest, in Georgia, and in New York and have been approached about the possibility of another meeting in 2007. All of these would be cooperative efforts with other organizations. We are exploring, in concert with a coalition of berry organizations, some very exciting promotional opportunities. We've opened discussions with USDA on the possibilities of seeking Specialty Crops funding for the bramble industry (see page 9). Our target date for having our new website up and running is June 1, and the special project we've funded with Dr. Pfeiffer of Virginia Tech will complement that effort. The June issue of *The Bramble* will detail our projects and the progress made.

Willing members are needed! Our Executive Council members take seriously their job of representing their regions. Please contact them with your ideas and comments. And please call or email the Executive Secretary if you would be willing to be a committee member for a project or are interested in one of the general committee areas mentioned below in the report on the annual meeting. Thank you in advance for your support.

—Ervin Lineberger

"People can be identified in three categories:

- Those that make things happen,
- Those that watch things happen, and
- Those that wonder what happened."

approved at this meeting; see the budget and financial summary on page 11.

Plans for the Future

NABGA president Ervin Lineberger presented the group with a vision for the future and a set of goals and objectives that had been earlier discussed by the Executive Council. NABGA will be greatly increasing its level of activity and service to members and our industry! Volunteers were sought to work in four basic areas:

- **Meetings/Educational Programs**
- **Research**
- **Industry Issues & Problems**
- **Bylaws and Finance**

The last of these will take on the task of examining our bylaws and financial recordkeeping and suggesting any changes needed to improve the function of the organization and conform to legal requirements.

Several people signed up on the spot for committees, and suggestions were offered for building membership and increasing Research Foundation funds.✱

A Taste of the Berry Fields

NABGA's special social and fundraising event at the Berry Conference celebrated small fruit products with wines, juices, jams, jellies, salsas, syrups, baked goods, and more, made from all kinds of raspberries, blackberries, strawberries, figs, and combinations of fruit....and, we raised about \$600 for the NABG Research Foundation.

Many members contributed products, especially various kinds of jams and preserves. Ervin and Debbie Lineberger and Richard and Susan Lynn contributed wines made from berries from their farms. New member Al Shirley of Pigeon Forge, TN made the extra effort to get donations from two wineries in his area and bring them to his first NABGA event. Tennessee strawberry grower Nancy Edwards brought two trays of delicious and beautifully arranged strawberry bread slices with a strawberry yogurt spread (see picture to right). Exhibitor Hillside Orchard Farm moved their slushie machine for the event, and contributed many products they



had created for NABGA members. Private label producers Braswell Foods and Dillman Farm sent samples of their products. Even the hotel got into the spirit by donating French bread, freshly baked just for us, for dipping samples of salsas and similar products. The crowd was noisy and cheerful, clearly having a good time.

Special thanks to Ervin Lineberger, who bought and brought all the supplies (plates, napkins, cups, crackers, etc.) for this event.



Donors to the Taste of the Berry Fields

Apple Barn Winery, TN
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Hillside Orchard Farm, GA
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Mountain Valley Vineyard, TN
Richard Ward, NC
Apologies to any donor who may have inadvertently been left off this list.

Variety Trial Yields Fine Jam

By Anthony Boutard

Responding to NABGA's call for products to feature in The Taste of the Berry Fields, Anthony Boutard sent two jars of jam, though he couldn't come to the conference himself. He sent the following letter along with his samples.

We are trialing WSU-1068, developed by Patrick Moore at the University of Washington, Puyallup. We planted the field in June 2003. We started picking the baby crop 20th June 2004 and continued to the 14th July. A total of 45 flats were sold, mostly to restaurants. We also made jam and froze some to assess their quality. Needless to say, the harvest was slow and a wash financially, but it

did give us a chance to introduce the berries to our customers.

The wry reaction of our workers was: "The berry is very slow and hard to pick because you put one berry in the flat and two in your mouth." The facts that the berries are large, the canes practically spineless, and the fruit holds well on the cane, are all a plus. The berry would make a superb U-pick berry for these reasons alone.

The versatility of the berry also recommends it for a small market farm such as ours, as well U-pick operations. It is delicious fresh, freezes well, and makes an excellent jam. We sold the berries as "Raspberry WSU 1068" and explained to our customers that it is a new cultivar developed using classic breeding techniques and is under evaluation. The restaurants, ranging from

institutional cafeterias run by "Bon Appetit" to white table cloth restaurants such as "Higgins," loved the berry, especially its clean fragrance and perfect balance of acidity and sugars.

We are very happy to be growing this berry. We look forward to having an easier name to market, such as "Cascade Market" or "Market Pride," reflecting the fact that the berry is well adapted to the requirements of the small market farm. Thus far, our reaction to WSU 1068 is 100% positive, and we have not uncovered a single problem with the plant or fruit, other than the fact that all of us would rather eat the berries than put them in the basket.✿

Anthony Boutard can be contacted at Ayers Creek Farm, 15219 SW Spring hill Road, Gaston, OR 97119, aboutard@orednet.org



Spring Bramble Chores

This list was developed by Dr. Gina Fernandez, Small Fruit Specialist at NC State University and reviewed by Dr. Marvin Pritts at Cornell. Chores and timing may be somewhat different in your area or for your cropping system.

Plant growth and development

- Plants deacclimate quickly
- Bud differentiation (additional flowers formed)
- Bud break
- Flowering
- Primocane emergence

Pruning and trellising

- Finish pruning and make sure all floricanes are tied to the trellis before budbreak.
- Rotate shift trellises to horizontal position before budbreak; rotate to upright position immediately after flowering.

Weeds

- Weed growth can be very vigorous at the same time as the bramble crop peaks. Don't let weeds get out of control.
- Weed control is best done earlier in the season before harvest commences.
- Hand-weed perennial weeds in and around plots.

Insect and disease scouting

The period of time in the spring when the plant is flowering is the most important season for control of insects and diseases. Know what your pests are and how to control them.

Water management

- Bramble plants need about 1"-2" water/week. This amount will be especially critical during harvest.
- In the South consider installing an overhead system for evaporative cooling. Turn on once or twice a day from 10 am to 3 pm for short periods of time (approx. 15 minutes) until mid afternoon.

Nutrient management

- Apply second half of nutrients if doing split application.

Marketing and miscellaneous

- Service and clean coolers.
- Make sure you have enough containers for fruit in the coming season.
- Prepare advertising and signage for your stand.
- Contact buyers to finalize orders.
- Hire pickers.
- Prepare signage for field orientation; it is easier to tell pickers where to go if rows are numbered.

What Causes *This*?

You're out in the field, and you notice something weird about some of your plants. Maybe the color is bad or the tips are droopy. Maybe the leaves are all chewed full of holes. Or perhaps there are some strange bumps or lesions on the canes. What causes these symptoms?

If you don't know the cause of the symptoms and don't happen to have an expert bramble doctor in your pick-up truck or at the local extension office, there are now two on-line diagnostic tools (at least, two we know about) to help you figure out the problem. Both feature clear, color illustrations of common and not-so common bramble problems and lead you down a decision tree to zero in on the cause of your particular problem.

One of these, the Blackberry Diagnostic Tool, is brand new and concentrates on blackberries and warmer climates. It is being created by Dr. Gina Fernandez at NCSU. There are still

a few pictures missing, but you can visit it at http://www.ncsu.edu/project/berries/diagnostic_tool/blackberry_diagnostic_tool.html. (Bookmark that, you don't want to type all that in twice!). Gina would be pleased to have your comments and suggestions as she fine-tunes the site.

The other, and a model for Dr. Fernandez's, is the Berry Diagnostic Tool, by Dr. Marvin Pritts. It is focused primarily on the Northeastern states and Canada and includes raspberries, strawberries, blueberries, and grapes. Find it at <http://www.hort.cornell.edu/department/faculty/pritts/BerryDoc/Berrydoc.htm>.*

Pictured above: Crown gall damage, and leaves curled by psyllids, from the Blackberry Diagnostic Tool, and sawfly larvae damage from the Berry Diagnostic tool. Find them in glowing color on the websites. mpressive....

Resources

The *Midwest Small Fruit Handbook* has been revised and is now available. The handbook features full-color photos of the major disease symptoms and insect pests. Comprehensive IPM recommendations are included for control of insects, diseases, and weeds on strawberry, brambles, blueberry, and grapes. The handbook is a bargain at \$9.75. Call 614-292-1607 or email pubs@ag.osu.edu to order. Visa and Mastercard orders are accepted.

The updated version of the New York *2005 Pest Management Guidelines for Berry Crops* is now online at <http://www.fruit.cornell.edu/Berries/pestman/index.html>.

GROWER PROFILE

Sweet Berry Farm

By Dan and Gretchen Copeland. Dan and Gretchen were "Grower Showcase" speakers at the recent National Berry Conference in Nashville, TN. This article is developed from an outline they prepared for their presentation.

Sweet Berry Farm is a pick-your-own farm in Texas. We have two locations: one in Marble Falls, about 45 miles west of Austin, the other in Lexington, about 45 miles east of Austin. Having two locations allows us to capture more of the Austin market, to spread out bad weather risk, such as thunderstorms and hail, over a larger geographic area, and to maintain a small-farm atmosphere.

Our clientele is primarily moms with kids, mostly "city folk." About 80% drive more than 45 minutes to the farm. Our theory is that if the farm is right around the corner, people will say, "I need to pick some berries, but I'm too



busy today and I'll do it tomorrow," and then the season is over before they ever get out. We like to be at least 30 minutes from the bulk of our target audience.

That is just the right distance for parents to make a firm decision that "this weekend we are going to visit the farm."

Our marketing philosophy is that the "experience" is #1 and the farm should be an "event to go to." Ten percent of our budget is spent on marketing. When there is a glut of berries, we spend

money on marketing, not labor to pick it. We keep the farm clean and presentable and offer a fun, wholesome one-of-a-kind family experience. We refuse to compete with our competitors on price and never lower base price. Prices are set to insure a profit – weather permitting! If you think your customers really enjoy coming to the farm, and it makes you feel good to see them experience it, then what good would you be doing them if you set your prices so low you

The Copelands require all their customers to use this custom cardboard box, which holds about 7 pounds of strawberries, for their PYO strawberries, blackberries, and potatoes.

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The Marble Falls location of Sweet Berry Farms. The blocks of land below and right of the Texas-shaped maze are strawberries; blackberries make up the darker block in the lower right.

went out of business?

Our strategies include offering ample and convenient parking, keeping a growing email, list (therefore lowering marketing costs), maintaining a web page and keeping it current, and developing large “press release media” list so we get as many free stories as possible. We resist commercialization and emphasize quality. We keep labor costs to a minimum and are proud to be a “Mom and Pop” farm.

Sweet Berry Farm has four acres of strawberries in Marble Falls and two in Lexington. We raise some Sweet Charlie – not because we like the berry but because of its earliness, but Chandler is our mainstay. We begin picking as early as Feb 29 or as late as April 1. Though overall we have mild temperatures, we experience great highs and lows. We only use 1.5 oz. frost covers for frost protection, having made a roller that greatly helps putting out and taking up covers. We usually deploy covers five times a spring. Our production methods are similar to other growers in the Southeast, and we have same growing problems as everyone else.

It is very important to plan our production to be open (and rolling) at certain times of the spring. Good Friday is historically our biggest sales day of the spring – in 2004 customers picked over

5,200 pounds of berries at the Marble Falls location on that day alone. We plan our strawberry marketing plan around Easter weekend.

Customers must pick into our boxes, which we have made for us (the box is plastered with our name, phone numbers and picking dates). The box costs the customers 50 cents (our cost is about 32 cents), and it holds about seven pounds of berries. We encourage customers to hold onto the box and bring it back with them on their next visit, and our scales are set up for the tare weight of the box. The same box is used for our PYO blackberries and potatoes. Strawberries are \$1.99 per pound PYO, \$2.50 pre-pick (we do almost no pre-pick, but sometimes we will take orders).

“Dig Your Own” potatoes, while not a huge part of our operation (less than one acre), are a nice addition to the income pie. We raise red Lasota new potatoes. A \$300 investment returns between \$2000 and \$3000. The best part is that they require virtually no labor and no sprays (most of the time). We put them on plastic-covered strawberry beds, so there are no weeds, punch holes with our strawberry planter, shove in slips by hand, and then pull off plastic to harvest. We only pull the plastic where we want people to dig that day, which helps harvesting occur in an orderly way.

Potatoes sell for \$0.89 per pound in our box.

We also raise blackberries - four acres in Marble Falls, and two in Lexington. Our varieties are:

- Brazos - May 8 to June 10; very thorny, very strong taste, while not the best berry it is earliest, which we need to overlap Strawberries going out. Makes better jam
- Kiowa - May 16 to July 4th; by far our favorite mainly because of ‘wow’ appeal; customers can’t get over the size
- Arapaho - May 20 to July 1st
- a few thornless for the novelty.

Customers do not care about thorns because our management system keeps the plants narrow and the fruit mostly on the outside, so they don’t have to reach in.

For initial plantings, in order to maximize land use and prevent a year of down time, we grow strawberries where the blackberries will be put. Then, we mow the strawberries when they are finished, replace the plastic, and plant tissue-cultured blackberry plugs. We remove every other bed to make rows on 12-foot centers (our strawberry beds are on 6-foot centers). Our trellis is nothing more than a 4-wire fence of 12.5-gauge smooth wire, with wires at 1.5, 2.5, 3.5 and 5 feet heights. Canes can grow too tall-we did not like customers bringing ladders-so we tip them at 4.5 feet. The first year is a pain in the neck to trellis; even erect varieties are not very erect. When canes reach a wire, we use a clip to hold it up, using clips from Kiwi West Products, Inc (1555 Willow Road, Nipomo, CA 93444. phone 800-929-3769, www.klipon.co.nz). When we remove floricanes after harvest, we leave the clips hooked on the wire, and are usually able to use existing clips to fasten new primocanes to the wire in one or two places. About mid-August we hedge with a gas powered hedger – if time allows. In winter, we hedge again. We sell blackberries for \$2.25 per pound PYO in our boxes. Our only pre pick is for call-in orders by elderly customers.

We offer spring and fall mazes (May/June and Oct/Nov). The mazes are grown from a 3-way Sorghum

continued next page

Sweet Berry Farm

Continued from previous page

Sudangrass cross and irrigated. The mazes are too susceptible to weather but because of potential for large return on a small investment, are worth the gamble. The maze in Marble Falls is the shape of Texas; that in Lexington is America. We make the paths "freehand" in big circling curves, careful to keep the grass "walls" at least six feet thick and have no dead-ends, so people don't cut through. Each maze has "towns" marked in their approximate map location. Each "town" has a sign and hole punch (a different punch shape for each town). Customers look for the towns and get a free drink if they find all the towns and have all the hole punches on their cards. We charge \$4.00 per person for the maze.

In fall, we truck in pumpkins and resell them (we grow a few but ours are terrible). This season has big potential - it can be as big or bigger than spring, but the season is short (four weeks), too much labor is required, and customers stay too long (one hour in spring com-

pared to four hours in Fall) and we run out of parking (we have a 240-car max). Our emphasis is on additional activities (hayrides, the mazes, a Disc Dog Tournament, pumpkin painting, scarecrow stuffing, face painting, and a petting zoo). Finally, we also make jelly and ice cream. They are very nice value-added products.*

You'll find articles about Sweet Berry's ice-cream making enterprise and email marketing in the 2005 Conference Proceedings.

CLIPPINGS

International Meeting

The International Society for Horticultural Science Ninth International Rubus and Ribes Symposium will be December 1-7, 2005 in Pulcon, Chile. For more information contact: Pilar Banados, Facultad de Agronomia Ingenieria Forestal, Universidad Catolica de Chile, Casilla 306-22, Santiago, CHILE; fax: 56-2-55334130, pbanados@puc.cl or online: www.faiif.puc.cl/rubus-ribeschile.html

New Specialty Crops Legislation Becomes Law

In December 2004, President George W. Bush signed the Specialty Crop Competitiveness Act (SCCA), landmark legislation revolutionizing federal funding policy for the nation's specialty crop industry. The SCCA authorizes \$54 million annually for five years to enhance the competitiveness, domestically and internationally, of each state's fresh produce crops. The law defines specialty crops as fruits and vegetables, nuts, dried fruits, and nursery crops.

The majority of the funding will come in the form of block grants through the state departments of agriculture. None of the millions of dollars earmarked for the produce industry will come in the form of direct subsidies. The bill was cosponsored by 122 members of Congress. Some key provisions:

State Block Grants: Directs the Secretary of Agriculture to make FY 2005 through 2009 State grants to enhance specialty crop competitiveness. Bases grant amounts on specialty crop

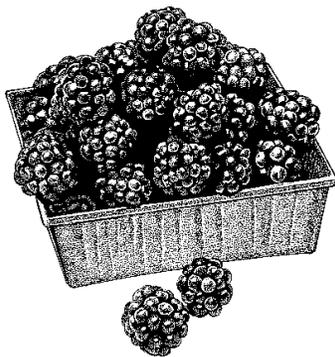
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Triple Crown thornless

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production value in each state. Authorizes \$44.5 million for FY 2005 through 2009 appropriations (though Congress must still vote appropriations each year).

Export Assistance: Authorizes FY 2005 through 2009 appropriations for specialty crop technical assistance, mostly directed towards reducing barriers to export trade. Directs the Secretary to reduce the number of backlog permit applications for the export of agricultural commodities report back on phytosanitary issues affecting specialty crop exports.

A Pest and Disease Response Fund is established to support emergency eradication and research activities in response to economic and health threats posed by pests and diseases. Authorizes \$1 million per year for this fund, which will accumulate if not spent.

Specialty Crop Research: Directs the Secretary to elevate the priority of methyl bromide alternative research and extension activities and reexamine the risks and benefits of extending the phase-out deadline. Authorizes an additional \$5 million for research on alternatives to MB. Establishes a new Specialty Crops Advisory Board to advise USDA on the effectiveness of research, extension and economic programs affecting the specialty crop industry. USDA is directed to address the recommendations of this board in its annual budget submission to Congress.❖

Information from the Florida Strawberry Growers Association newsletter, Dec. 20 2004, plus other sources. NABGA is looking into seeking bramble funding through this program. Due to the

block-grant process, however, we may need to work at the state level rather than nationally. Contact NABGA president Ervin Lineberger if you'd be interested in working on this project.

Food Safety Reminders

By Betsy Bihn, National GAPs Program Coordinator, Dept. of Food Science, Cornell.

With spring almost upon us, most growers are busy thinking about planting or uncovering their crops. It is also time to consider marketing, food safety, harvesting, and selling the crop.

If you are a berry grower who operates a U-pick operation, have you considered providing toilets and hand washing facilities for your customers? Bathroom facilities encourage hand washing and minimize the need for customers to use the field when desperately in need of toilet facilities. It is never nice to consider customers relieving themselves in the field, but if no toilet is available I am willing to guess that it happens. Preventing crop contamination by human waste is very important.

Another thing to consider prior to the picking season is the picking containers used to harvest berries. Many farms allow individuals to bring their own containers for picking. Some provide containers. If you provide containers, be certain to have a standard system for washing and sanitizing containers between customers to insure the containers do not contribute to contamination. You may want to move to single-use

containers to simplify the process. If you move to single-use containers, do not forget to maximize your marketing by placing stickers that advertise your farm, hours of operation, and other important information. Food safety is important. Make changes that improve safety and make sense to the success of your business.

If you have questions or comments, please contact me at eab38@cornell.edu, 315 787 2625, or visit our website at www.gaps.cornell.edu.

From New York Berry News, March 18, 2005. You can view the complete newsletter at www.nysaes.cornell.edu/pp/extension/tfabp/newslett/nybn43b.pdf

Berry Health Symposium Scheduled

The 2005 International Berry Health Benefits Symposium will be held in Corvallis, Oregon on June 13 and 14, 2005. The meeting is convened in recognition of the growing body of scientific knowledge that has unequivocally established that dietary intake of berry fruits has a positive and profound effect on human disease prevention. Organizers hope that the meeting will kick off a coalition of berry producers worldwide to unite in supporting research that will help them to continue to sell their products. Keynote speaker is Dr. Gary Stoner of Ohio State University, who is currently involved in research on using black raspberries to prevent colon and esophageal cancers. Talks include "Does the Production Environment Affect Bioactive Properties of Berries?", "Comparison of Berry Varieties for Anti-Cancer Characteristics", and "New Insights into the Health Benefits of Phytochemicals for Chronic Disease", among many others. A tour of the Willamette Valley berry industry is also scheduled. For details and registration information, contact Cat McKenzie at cat@oregon-berries.com or 541-456-2264 or visit www.oregonstate.edu/dept/foodsci/berryhealth.htm.

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SSR Markers for Brambles

By Kim Lewers, USDA-ARS-BARC-Fruit Lab, Beltsville, Maryland

Introduction

Traditional bramble breeding relies on years of evaluation to allow a breeder to select seedlings with all the best traits of both parents used in a cross-pollination. As a result, the process of developing new bramble cultivars can take longer than breeders, nurseries, and growers would prefer. In the future, breeders will have available genetic assay tools that will allow them to select indirectly for traits that usually take years to become evident. Some particularly useful genetic assay tools are called simple sequence repeat molecular markers (SSRs). Breeders can use SSR markers as an indirect assay to determine which seedlings in a breeding population will have a trait that may not express until the plant is mature. Once researchers find

specific SSR markers inherited with a specific trait 95% of the time or more, breeders can use those SSR markers to save time, field space, labor, and associated expense in selecting the next great bramble cultivars.

To develop SSR markers and begin using them with brambles, we partnered with Dr. Courtney Weber of Cornell University and Dr. John Cark of the University of Arkansas. Dr. Weber has a black raspberry ('Jewel') × red raspberry (NY322) population segregating for fall fruiting, cane tipping, fruit color, and other important traits. Dr. Clark has a blackberry population ('APF-12' × 'Arapaho') segregating for primocane fruiting, thornlessness, and several other traits.

In the last two years, our lab developed 44 SSRs from strawberry and tried to use them with raspberry and blackberry, because the three species are somewhat related. We found that around 10% (five and seven SSRs) of the strawberry-derived SSRs will be useful with brambles, but that number is grossly insufficient compared with the 100-plus

SSR markers desired for this research.

Therefore, we collaborated with Dr. Julie Graham of the Scottish Crop Research Institute (SCRI) to use 66 SSRs she developed from the red raspberry cultivar, 'Glen Moy'.

NABGA provided the funding to purchase the SSR markers developed by Dr. Graham, so we could test them with Dr. Weber's raspberry population and Dr. Clark's blackberry

population. Our objective was to find out which of these markers could be used with each of the populations in searching for SSR markers that are inherited with the valuable traits we want in new cultivars.

Experimental Design

We combined the SSR markers with DNA extracted from the population parents and used them together in polymerase chain reactions in the lab. When the reactions were complete, we measured the sizes of the products resulting from these reactions. To measure and compare the reaction product size for the different parents. We used the USDA-ARS Beltsville Area Research Center's ABI 3730 genetic analyzer machine. We searched for SSRs that gave reaction products of different sizes for either 'Jewel' and NY322, the parents of the raspberry population, or 'APF-12' and 'Arapaho' the parents of the blackberry population.

Summary of Results and Conclusions

The percentages of 'Glen Moy' red raspberry-derived SSR markers that gave a reaction product were 47 % for black raspberry 'Jewel', 65 % for red raspberry selection NY322, 25 % for blackberry 'APF-12', and 26 % for blackberry 'Arapaho'. By comparing the sizes of the products generated when individual SSR markers were used on the black raspberry, 'Jewel', and the red raspberry, NY322, we determined that 45 of the SSR markers can be used with the raspberry population. When similar comparisons were made between the sizes of products generated from 'APF-12' compared with those from 'Arapaho', we determined 14 SSR markers can be used with the blackberry population.

This is an improvement, but the number still falls far short of the desired number of over 100 SSR markers. More

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Each research project funded by the NABG Research Foundation submits a progress report to the Foundation at the end of the year. Reports on all projects are printed in the *Bramble* over the course of the year. This is one of the reports received in December 2004 for projects funded in February 2004.

SSR markers are needed for both raspberry and blackberry. The Scottish Crops Research Institute is continuing development of more SSR markers for raspberry, but SSR markers specifically for blackberry were not being developed by any research group that we were aware of.

The findings from this NABGA-funded research were used to support a request for the purchase of over 2,000 blackberry DNA sequences from which we expect to be able to develop 200 new SSR markers for use on these two populations. Therefore, the \$1500 NABGA generously provided has resulted in a resource to bramble researchers valued at \$24,700. Currently we are using the raspberry SSR markers with the raspberry and blackberry populations. We found one SSR marker inherited 82% of the time with the primocane fruiting trait in blackberry. We will continue searching to find SSR markers inherited over 95% of the time with each of the traits.✿

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If you are interested in acquiring our product please contact: Sylvio Miron, e-mail: mironcelis@cantv.net, phone: 011 58 (414) 748-5760 or Pablo Celis e-mail: ealtochama@cantv.net, phone: 011 58 (274) 271-2383, phone/fax: 011 58 (274) 271-2105 Address: Piso 4, Torre Empresarial Alto Chama, Avenida Andrés Bello, Mérida, Venezuela

NABGA FINANCIAL REPORT

FY 2004 Financial Summary

10/1/03-9/30/04

INCOME

Bramble ads	\$ 0
Dues	9,820
Acreage assessments	210
Literature sales	0
Interest	7
Am Fruit Grower	580
Northland BN	1,280
Fruit Grower News	6
Miscellaneous	100
Interest income-CD	299
Conference	2,970
Donations (research)	<u>516</u>
Total Income	\$15,788

EXPENSE

Management	5,750
Newsletter Exp.	355
Bank/Card Exp.	180
Literature Exp.	0
Office Exp.	938
Telecommunications	30
Postage	389
Printing	535
Travel	0
Am Fruit Grower	519
Fruit Grower News	0
Northland BN	1,210
Conference	4,251
Transfer to Research Foundation	<u>2,216</u>
Total Expense	\$14,673

FY 2005 Budget

10/04-9/30/05

INCOME

Bramble ads	\$ 600
Dues & acreage assessments	10,00
All subscription sales (net)	100
Interest income-CD	150
Conference	1,000
Donations (research)	<u>400</u>
Total Income	\$12,250

EXPENSE

Management	\$7,500
Newsletter Exp.	600
Bank/Card Exp.	175
Office Exp.	900
Telecommunications	150
Postage	450
Printing	600
Travel	250
Transfer to Research Foundation	<u>2,400</u>
Total Expense	\$13,025

In 2-Year CD \$16,260

Notes: NABGA's fiscal year runs Oct. 1 – Sept. 30. Line items differ because of a change in financial recordkeeping systems during the 2004 year. NABGA's CD matures in June, 2005, and the Council has determined to cash it in and use it over the next few years to build the organization. For more information on these financial reports, contact the NABGA office.

NABG-RF FINANCIAL REPORT

(North American Bramble Growers Research Foundation)

2004-2005

INCOME

2004 Membership %	\$1,800
2004 Membership Donations	516
Interest	2
Donations	2250
Additional membership %	<u>600</u>
Total	\$5,168

EXPENSE

2004 Research Grants	\$ 7,500
2003 Research Grant	1,600
Miscellaneous	<u>11.00</u>
Total	\$9111.00

Notes: Although NABG-RF figures membership donations on a fiscal year that is the same as NABGA's, availability of funds for grants is figured at the time of the Foundation's annual meeting in February and includes some additional donations. 25% of grower membership fees goes directly to NABG-RF. The Executive Council approved an additional percentage to bring the total per member to \$25 for 2004 donations.

NABGA 2005 Officers and Executive Council

The regions represented by the members of the Executive Council were redefined at the Association's annual meeting on February 18, 2005. Those districts that are new or changed have an asterisk beside them. See page 2 for a more detailed explanation. New committees are also being developed.

President- Ervin Lineberger, Killdeer Farm, 300 Goforth Rd, Kings Mt., NC 28086, phone 704-739-6602, e-mail fruitgrower@netzero.net.

Vice President- Thomas N. Walters, Sakuma Bros. Farms, P.O. Box 427, Burlington, WA 98233, phone 360-757-6611, e-mail tomwalters@sakumabros.com.

Executive Secretary & Treasurer- Debby Wechsler, 1138 Rock Rest Rd. Pittsboro, NC 27312, phone 919-542-3687, fax 919-548-4037, e-mail nabga@mindspring.com.

Research Committee Chair-Gina Fernandez, NCSU Dept. of Horticultural Science, Box 7609, Raleigh, NC 27695, phone 919-513-7416, e-mail Gina.Fernandez@ncsu.edu.

Bramble Editor- Debby Wechsler, 1138 Rock Rest Rd. Pittsboro, NC 27312, phone 919-542-3687, fax 919-548-4037, e-mail nabga@mindspring.com.

Regional Representatives

Region 1 (Represents all of Canada). Open seat.

Region 2 (Represents CT, NH, MA, ME, RI & VT) **Nate Nourse**, Nourse Farms, 41 River Rd., South Deerfield, MA 01373, phone 413-665-2658, e-mail info@noursefarms.com.

***Region 3** (Represents MI, NJ, NY, PA, Europe, and South Africa), **Dena Fiacchino**, Cornell Cooperative Extension, 3288 Main St. Mexico, NY 13114, 315-963-7286 ext 203, e-mail: dcf25@cornell.edu

***Region 4** (Represents DE, MD, OH, & WV) **Sue Loomis**, D&S Farm, P.O. Box 272, Charlotte Hall, MD 20622, phone 301-290-1179, e-mail sueloomis@erols.com.

***Region 5** (Represents AL, GA, FL, LA, MS, & TX). **Stanley Scarborough**, SunnyRidge Farm, P.O. Box 3036, Winter Haven, FL, phone 863-294-8856, e-mail stanley.scarborough@sunnyridge.com.

Region 6 (Represents AR, IN, IL, KS, KY, MN, MO, ND, OK, SD, NE, TN & WI) **Bob Blain**, Riverfront Berry Farm, 2799 N. 1700 East Rd., Martinton, IL 60951, phone 815-428-7382, e-mail BOCO@dlogue.net.

***Region 7** (Represents DC, NC, SC, & VA) **Milton Parker**, Coastal Plains Horticultural Enterprises, 622 Wedgewood Drive, Whiteville, NC 27472, phone 910-640-1791, e-mail yamman552002@yahoo.com.

Region 8 (Represents AK, AZ, CA, CO, ID, HA, MT, NM, OR, UT, WA, WY,

Grant Opportunity for Value-Added Enterprises

USDA Rural Business-Cooperative Service (RBS) announces the availability of approximately \$14.3 million in competitive grant funds for fiscal year (FY) 2005 to help independent agricultural producers enter into value-added activities. The grant program is to help eligible independent producers of agricultural commodities, agricultural producer groups, farmer cooperatives, and producer-based business ventures develop strategies to create marketing opportunities and to help develop business plans for viable marketing opportunities. **Applications must be submitted by May 6, 2005.** For more information: www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/coops/vadg.htm

Mexico, Central & South America) **Thomas N. Walters**, Sakuma Bros. Farms, P.O. Box 427, Burlington, WA 98233, phone 360-757-6611, e-mail tomwalters@sakumabros.com.

***At-Large Representative: Carlos Fear**, Driscoll Associates, 151 Silliman Rd., Watsonville, CA 95076, phone 831-722-5577, e-mail Carlos.Fear@driscolls.com.

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