

Vermont Vegetable and Berry News – January 7, 2010

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RECORD ATTENDANCE AT NEW ENGLAND VEG. & FRUIT CONFERENCE

The 2009 New England Vegetable & Fruit Conference (NEVFC) and Trade Show held Dec 15-17 in Manchester NH was attended by a record-setting 1,557 people. The proceedings are now on-line at: <http://www.newenglandvfc.org/proceedings.html>.

REVIEW OF JUNE BEARING STRAWBERRY VARIETIES

By Pam Fisher, Berry Crop Specialist, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture

Ontario strawberries are grown in several different climatic zones and a diverse range of soils. The standard varieties in Ontario for local shipping, and on farm market sales, are Annapolis (early season) and Jewel (mid-late season). For pick-your-own and on-farm sales Cavendish (early-midseason) and Mira (mid-late season) are reliable. Honeoye (early season) and Kent (mid season) are grown for these markets also. These varieties grow well in most locations, although Honeoye and Kent are susceptible to black root rot and fruit colour tends to be too dark in southern Ontario.

Many other varieties have value but should be limited in extent of planting. In Ontario, these varieties include (from early to late) Mohawk, Wendy, Brunswick, Glooscap, Cabot, Sapphire, and Governor Simcoe. Some may have done well in trial plantings and warrant further commercial experience. Others may be adapted to a specific region or be useful only for selected markets. Some work well on a small scale and fit certain gaps in production. For example, Mohawk is valued for its great taste and earliness, although yields are too low for extensive production. Governor Simcoe is a high yielding orange-red firm variety on the sandy soils of south-central Ontario, but not as popular in eastern or northern Ontario.

There are many new varieties available, and although they always sound exciting at first, growers should test them on a small scale for several years. Varieties recommended for trial in Ontario include V151, L'Amour, L'Authentique Orleans, R14, St. Pierre, Serenity, Valley Sunset. Information on how these varieties respond to diseases is especially important because some varieties will require more fungicides and different management practices to prevent pest damage. Following are some comments on newer or lesser known varieties which are worth consideration.

Early Season Varieties:

V151 (University of Guelph, Simcoe, Ontario, 2007). This is an early variety with medium-large, bright, medium-red, triangular-shaped fruit. Fruit is firm with good quality. Yields are high but later fruit tends to be smaller. V 151 is very susceptible to anthracnose fruit infections, and also appears to be susceptible to green petal disease. Flavour sometimes bland. It is interesting as an early shipping variety, and recommended for trial.

Mohawk (USDA, Beltsville, 1994) Vigourous very early variety. Fruit medium sized, irregular or heart-shaped bright, orange-red, with pale interior. Fruit is firm with excellent flavour. Resistant to red stele, tolerant to mildew. Yields may be low, expect two good early picks. Recommended for local markets and early shipping.

Wendy (AAFC, Kentville, N.S. 2006) This is a productive early season variety with vigourous plants. Primary fruit is wedge-shaped, others conic. Compared to other early-season varieties, fruit is larger than Evangeline but skin strength is softer than Annapolis. Wendy is susceptible to verticillium wilt and extremely susceptible to angular leaf spot. The fruit tend to be dark and softer in SW Ontario. Plants do not stand up well in stressful conditions. Recommended for early season PYO and local markets, in eastern and northern Ontario.

Mid-late season varieties:

Sapphire (University of Guelph, Simcoe, Ontario, 2002). This variety is late mid-season, similar in season to Kent. The fruit is large and of very good quality with consistently shaped bright red large berries with good, sometimes mild flavour. The plants are vigourous and tolerant to Sinbar. On the down side, seeds are prominent, fruit is susceptible to botrytis, and otherwise, disease tolerance unknown. Yield is low to moderate. Recommended for PYO and fresh market, trial only.

Mira (AAFC, Kentville N.S, 1996) Mira is mid-season to late mid-season, ripening a few days after Kent. Plants are high yielding, and semi-vigourous; fruit is bright red but has a white interior. Berries are relatively large, conical, firm and uniform in shape. Yields are similar to Kent, but berries are firmer and have better quality compared to Kent. The fruit maintains good quality and does not darken in hot weather. Mira is resistant to red stele and most leaf diseases, but seems to be susceptible to black root rot. On the downside, the flavour of Mira is fair and may be tart. Berries may be uniformly coloured before they are completely ripe with full flavour. Berry texture becomes mealy under hot conditions. Mira is very sensitive to Sinbar. It is suitable for fresh market, not as popular for PYO.

St. Pierre (AAFC, St. Jean- sur- Richelieu, Québec 2002.) This is also a very late variety, high yielding with large bright, light red fruit. St. Pierre has a large green calyx and excellent fruit quality, consistent fruit size, good flavour and good shelf life. It is very susceptible to anthracnose fruit rot and powdery mildew. St. Pierre has potential for fresh market and shipping and is recommended for trial.

Very late season varieties:

Serenity (University of Guelph, Simcoe, Ontario, 2003) This is a late variety, with large firm, conical fruit. It produces high yields of very large, bright soft-skinned fruits. Berries are especially large in early picks. However, Serenity is very susceptible to anthracnose fruit rot. Fruit tips can be seedy, and skin easily bruised. Berries in later picks are small and pointy. Plants are either susceptible to root diseases or winter injury, as some plantings have lost vigour. For this reason, Serenity is recommended for trial only, for shipping and fresh markets.

Valley Sunset (AAFC, Kentville, Nova Scotia 2006). This is a late flowering and fruiting variety with large bright red fruit and moderate yields. Fruit has a mild sweet flavour, slightly soft skin, and is somewhat seedy.

This variety is not likely suitable for shipping but will be a big hit with pick your own. Harvest period is short and although this variety starts after Jewel, it is finished at about the same time. Valley Sunset is susceptible to powdery mildew and angular leaf spot. It is recommended for local fresh market and PYO to extend the season, for trial only.

MARKETING COURSE FOR EXPERIENCED VEGETABLE GROWERS

"Marketing That Sells" is 3-day course designed to help experienced vegetable growers boost their marketing. The course will help participants develop practical, action-oriented marketing plans in time for the 2010 growing season. Learn how to select, implement and evaluate marketing strategies that match your farm operations and budget. Follow up one-on-one mentoring is available for 5 course participants. Wednesdays, Jan. 27, Feb. 10 and Feb. 24 (March 3 snow day), 9:30 am to 3:30 pm in Berlin, Vermont. Course fee: \$125, includes all books, course materials, lunch and refreshments. Discounts available for individuals who attend both the course and NOFA's Direct Marketing Conference on Jan. 9. For more information, go to the NOFA-VT website and click on the Direct Marketing Conference link or contact NOFA at info@nofavt.org or 802-434-4122.

REMINDER: REGISTER FOR VT VEGETABLE AND BERRY GROWERS MEETING

The annual meeting will take place on Feb 1 at the Capital Plaza Hotel in Montpelier – details at: http://www.uvm.edu/vtvegandberry/meetings/VVBGA_Feb10_Montpelier.pdf

VERMONT VEGETABLE AND BERRY NEWSLETTER SURVEY RESULTS

Thanks to all who participated in the Nov/Dec 2009 on-line evaluation of this newsletter. Of the 369 current e-mail subscribers, there were 150 responses (41%). Almost 85% of respondents said the newsletter should continue as it is (every other week in season, monthly in winter) while 15% said that once a month would be enough. About 28% said they use information from the newsletter on a weekly basis, 57% said monthly, 13% said quarterly and 2% said once a year. Overall 47% of respondents said the information enhanced farm profitability, 78% said it improved pest management, 70% said it improved soil stewardship or nutrient management, and 41% said it improved farm business management or marketing; 93% said they used pest, crop and soil management articles; 91% used 'reports from the field,' 76% used notices of meetings and 62% used marketing or business management articles. About 63% said they preferred several short articles (1-2 paragraphs) in each newsletter while 37% said they liked longer articles; 89% of respondents have high speed internet and 71% live in Vermont.