



## ONTARIO BERRY GROWERS ASSOCIATION

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## August 2010 NEWSLETTER

### Presidents Report

The June strawberry and summer raspberry harvests are completed and many of you are now selling day neutrals, fall raspberries, early apples and watching your pumpkins turn orange.

In eastern Ontario, the early warm weather in April followed by record cold temperatures on Mothers' Day weekend lead to some extensive frost damage to strawberries and early sweet corn. The early harvest dates for strawberries and raspberries created some marketing challenges as it seemed that many PYO customers were not tuned in to the two week early season.

Strawberry yields were generally average in the east but raspberry yields were the best in recent history. Very early strawberry renovation, timely precipitation, and lots of sun and heat should bode well for the 2011 crop outlook.

Hopefully the very low prices for blueberries in the supermarkets will not hurt Ontario blueberry sales too much. This week chain stores in our area were selling 3 pints of blueberries for \$4.00 with both U.S. and B.C. product to choose from.

The Ontario horticulture industry continues to be blessed with very positive press regarding buying local and the health benefits of fruits and vegetables. In my opinion there is no other sector of agriculture that has as much potential as horticulture. The public is very supportive at this time. However, one cautionary note is that we must be careful not to kill the goose that is laying those golden eggs. We should charge fair prices and always expect a fair return on our investment, while

keeping in mind that today's consumers are very price conscious. If local produce is significantly more expensive than similar produce from other countries, we could be harming ourselves in the long run.

Here's to a good fall with late frosts to allow for easier harvesting of fall raspberries, day neutral strawberries, and other crops. Hopefully many of you can be at the twilight meeting on September 15<sup>th</sup> at Tigchelaar's in Vineland. This is an opportunity to see many progressive techniques and to take something home that will be useful to your operation.

Best Regards,

Paul Ralph

### From OBG Headquarter

The growing season has gone by quickly but there continue to be many important jobs to accomplish to ensure the potential of a good crop next year.

It has been a busy summer here at the OBG office and I want to thank my summer assistant Erin who has made my life bearable during a very busy time of year. Many of you have spoken to Erin directly or received correspondence from her. This is her third summer with me and she has become quite knowledgeable about the workings of the OBG. I am very hopeful she will return for a fourth summer.

We continue to juggle a number of projects here both in research and promotion. We have had some good promotional items this year which included new introductions of biodegradable and reusable bags. We are in the business of being stewards of the land and both of these items are not only attractive but meet the demands of today's consumer.

I would really like to hear any feedback regarding our promotional activities. This is an area that I am very happy to take suggestions and hear your ideas.

I look forward to visiting with many of you at Tigchelaar's in September at our annual twilight meeting on the 15<sup>th</sup>.

All the best!

Kevin

**STRAWBERRY Tyme** **Strawberry & Raspberry Plants**

Your **ONLY** supplier of strawberry & raspberry plants grown under the guidelines of the **'Ontario Plant Propagation Program'**

Ask us about this amazing fertilizer!

All plants grown by us are treated with the Amino Acid **'PHCA'** which helps kick start the plants in the spring when planted.

A followup fertility program which includes **'PHCA'** is highly recommended to maximize the potential of the plant.

**Also available -** Blueberry Plants, Blackberry Canes, Yellow, Purple & Black Raspberry Canes, Asparagus Roots, Rhubarb Roots, Horseradish Roots.

R.R. #2 Simcoe, ON Canada N3Y 4K1  
Phone: 1-519-426-3099 Fax: 1-519-426-2573  
[www.strawberrytyme.com](http://www.strawberrytyme.com)

## Achene Report

The verification trial meeting for both strawberries and raspberries was done in season with no major issues noted. The Achene committee will look at the results closely at our next meeting to see if there are any actions to be taken.

Thanks  
Paul Watson  
Achene Committee Chair

## Are you receiving your complimentary Grower newspaper?

**The Grower** is Canada's oldest horticultural publication, serving fruit and vegetable growers. It is published monthly by the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association. We would like to offer you a complimentary subscription to **The Grower** newspaper. If you are currently receiving **The Grower** and your address has recently changed, please take this opportunity to update your mailing address with us!

You can contact The Grower by mail, fax or email.

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## School Delivery Program

The OBGAs are looking for a small number of farms to deliver strawberries and/or raspberries to schools in September and early October. This program is part of our Ontario Market Investment Fund project. The OBGAs have funds to help support this initiative. If you are interested or want to know more contact the OBGAs office.

## Promotional Materials

We still have in stock promotional brochures for strawberries, raspberries and blueberries. The brochures have been improved and are quite attractive. The cost of the brochures is \$5.00 per hundred which is half of the cost of production. Placemats are also available at the same price. The reusable strawberry bags and biodegradable bags sold out quickly and we hope to repeat those buys again for

next season. Please let me know if you would like to preorder any of the bags for next year.



## CHC Food Safety Manuals

The OBGGA has a very good supply of Food Safety Manuals from the Canadian Hort. Council. Manuals are available in both French and English. If you would like a copy sent to you please contact the OBGGA office. The manuals are also available for downloading but you require a password to do so. The password can be obtained from the OBGGA office

## Retail Sign and Label Toolkit

The Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs now has a new Retail Sign and Label Toolkit available for vendors of fruit and vegetables.

Regulation 378, Grades – Fruit and Vegetables under the *Farm Products Grades and Sales Act* requires that specific information be included on signage and labels for Ontario-grown fruit and vegetables sold directly to consumers at the farm gate, roadside

stands, farmers' markets or any other retail locations. The new toolkit is designed to help producers, vendors and any retailers take the guess work out of preparing signs and labels for produce, and also help them provide consumers with the information they need to make informed decisions when they purchase Ontario-grown fruit and vegetables. It includes easy-to-use templates and examples that are available in various formats.

The toolkit can be found at:

[www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/food/inspection/fruitveg/retailsign.htm](http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/food/inspection/fruitveg/retailsign.htm) or can be ordered in alternate formats as well by contacting 1-877-424-1300.

The toolkit is part of Ontario's Open for Business initiative, which aims to create faster and smarter government-to-business services and regulations that make Ontario more attractive to business development while protecting the public interest.

If you have any questions, please contact Suzete Moniz, Regulatory and Standards Coordinator, at 519-826-4655.

## National Raspberry Agency Proposed

There has been an initiative to organize a national raspberry and blueberry organization. This initiative began in BC where they have large acreages of fresh blueberries and processing raspberries. Below you will find a discussion of the benefits of such an organization. Money raised from such an organization could come back to Ontario to be used for research and marketing projects.

## WHY DO WE NEED TO MOVE TOWARDS A NATIONAL AGENCY?

There are a variety of elements which impact the market and trends, which we can change with enough resources.

**The raspberry market is growing and so is the imported market share.** The Canadian raspberry market includes approximately 78,000,000 lbs of fresh and processed raspberries of which only 36% are Canadian. From 2008 to 2009 we saw imported product take over 6% of the total market share. \*There is no data available for fresh imports prior to 2008.

**An equitable contribution system is needed to support industry growth.** Over 60% of the raspberries sold in Canada are from importers who do not pay for any of the promotion, marketing and research we do. Importers need to make equal investments in the cost of building raspberry markets as they will benefit from our efforts.

**Canadian exports have decreased by 40%.** As trade between countries increases with globalization, the economies of other countries are also growing. Other countries are beginning to have the capacity to supply raspberries and, with their aggressive marketing, are making themselves strong competitors for our markets. Although our main export market, the USA, has seen 40% of their industry come from offshore, Canada has seen a substantial decrease in its exports into that market (see chart below). Canadians need to change this trend. As well, new markets could represent new opportunities, especially for processed products. \* Available data includes raspberries, mulberries, etc, uncook, steam or boil in water, sweetened or not, frozen

**Consumers want affordable products that are good for their health.** Food prices have increased due to a variety of factors including increased production costs. Adapting to this change has put added importance on research and innovation if raspberry growers want to remain competitive with other fruits and other suppliers. At the same time consumers desire food that is good for them. Before they can be informed of the positive nutritional value of raspberries the research needs to be done by us. Funds are needed to do the production research and to validate raspberry health benefits.

**Buyers want produce that meet food safety standards.** When making purchasing decisions, buyers (wholesale, retail or consumer) expect a supply of safe food. To ensure public health and maintain confidence, food safety standards need to be met. Implementing a food safety program requires resources to educate growers in practices and paperwork, staff to perform audits, improvements to on-farm practices, standards maintenance, etc. Money spent on implementing and maintaining these programs will aid in Canadians being able to capitalize on what they have.



The advertisement for Haygrove tunnels features the company logo at the top, which consists of the word "Haygrove" in a serif font and "tunnels" in a script font below it. Below the logo, the text lists product features: "Low Cost Multi-bay Tunnels", "Tractor Accessible", "3 Season Protection", and "Field Scale Tunnels", followed by "Over 4,000 Acres Sold!". A black horizontal bar with the white text "ENGINEERED AND BUILT BY GROWERS" is positioned below the features. At the bottom, contact information is provided in two columns: "Canadian Sales Strawberry Tyme Farms, Inc. RR2, Simcoe, ON, Canada N3Y 4K1" and "Phone 1-519-426-3099 www.haygrove.com styme@kwic.com".

**Buyers want new products and recyclable packaging.** Developing value-added products and sound recyclable packaging are other strategies which can expand the market and gain value-chain efficiencies. Funds are needed for innovation.

**Governments are nurturing self-supporting industry efforts.** However, to access government funding organizations must have the capacity for sound governance, organized reporting systems to aid in accountability, be able to measure performance, and to demonstrate transparency with practical communication strategies. Infusing policy and structures which can provide a sustainable industry requires collaboration. We can do more with the little we have.

For more information please contact: Karen Fenske at StratPoint Solutions, 5882 L & A

Road, Vernon, BC, V1B 3S4 Tl:  
250.306.1256 Fx: 250.541.0663  
stratpoint@shaw.ca

## **Effects of Length of Blossom Removal on Production of Albion and Seascape Dayneutral Strawberries**

Becky Hughes, John Zandstra and Adam Dale, University of Guelph

Dayneutral strawberry plants have the capacity to flower and fruit continuously during the growing season. For many years, we have recommended that growers remove the blossom clusters from dayneutral strawberry plants for the first six weeks after planting to allow the crowns to establish before they fruit. We wanted to find out if this 6-week period could be reduced, decreasing costs and potentially improving productivity.

Trials were established in May 2007 to examine the effects of 4, 6 and 8 weeks of blossom removal following planting on the yield, berry size and time of harvest in the first and second picking years of dayneutral strawberries. The trials were located at the University of Guelph Research Stations in Cedar Springs and New Liskeard. Seascape was planted in New Liskeard, and Albion and Seascape were planted in Cedar Springs. Twenty-plant plots were established in twin rows with 20cm between plants and 30cm between rows on raised beds at 2m centers. The beds were covered with 1.0 mil black polyethylene mulch. All plots received regular drip irrigation. Fertilizer was applied through the drip system. Cultural practices were adapted to the local soil and climate. In New Liskeard the plants were covered with straw mulch and a 1.5 oz/sq yd floating row cover for the winter. A 1.0 oz/sq yd floating row cover was used in Cedar Springs.

Fruit was harvested from a 1-metre section of each plot twice weekly in the first and second year. Fruit was sorted into unmarketable and marketable (regularly shaped fruit with a diameter greater than 1.5

cm and no rot). The marketable fruit was weighed and counted, and berry weights were calculated.

In the planting year at Cedar Springs, there were no significant effects on either the yield or berry weight of Albion and Seascape (Table 1). However, the yield and berry weight of Albion *tended* to increase as the length of blossom removal increased. The *trend* was the opposite for Seascape, as both the total and marketable yield tended to decrease as the blossom removal period increased.

As the time from bloom to harvest is around 30 days, you would expect to harvest sooner with a shorter blossom removal period. This was the case in the cooler climate in New Liskeard but not in Cedar Springs. In New Liskeard, the first harvest started 27 to 34 days after the end of blossom removal (Table 2). In Cedar Springs, the first harvests of Seascape all occurred at the same time regardless of the length of blossom removal. Higher temperatures in Cedar Springs may have delayed flower initiation in the treatments with 4 and 6 weeks of blossom removal. If this had not happened, perhaps the yields of these treatments would have been even higher. The length of blossom removal in the planting year had no effect on yields or berry size in the second picking year in Cedar Springs (data not shown), however there were effects in the second year in New Liskeard (Table 2). The shortest period of blossom removal in 2007 resulted in the highest yields and berry size in Seascape in 2008 in New Liskeard.

In summary, when the blossom clusters were removed for only four weeks after planting, Seascape yields were not reduced in either Cedar Springs or New Liskeard. This should reduce costs and, provided it is not too hot, result in earlier harvests.

Perhaps it is possible to decrease the length of blossom removal even further especially if large-crowned plants are available. A trial is planned for 2011 comparing the effects of crown size at planting and the length of blossom removal on production of dayneutral strawberries.

**Table 1.** Days to harvest, yields and berry weights in the first picking year in Cedar Springs.<sup>1</sup>

Cultivar	Blossoms removed for <sup>3</sup>	Days to harvest <sup>2</sup>	Yield (kg/m)		Average berry weight (g)
			Total	Marketable	
Seascape	4 weeks	85	4.0	2.9	14.8
	6 weeks	85	3.9	2.7	15.0
	8 weeks	86	3.7	2.6	15.7
	<b>Average</b>	<b>85 a</b>	<b>3.9 a</b>	<b>2.8 a</b>	<b>15.2 b</b>
Albion	4 weeks	94	2.1	1.6	15.7
	6 weeks	89	2.3	1.6	16.4
	8 weeks	97	2.4	1.8	16.4
	<b>Average</b>	<b>93 b</b>	<b>2.3 b</b>	<b>1.7 b</b>	<b>16.2 a</b>

**Table 2.** Results for the first and second picking year for Seascape in New Liskeard.<sup>1</sup>

Blossoms removed for <sup>3</sup>	1 <sup>st</sup> picking year				2 <sup>nd</sup> picking year		
	Days to harvest <sup>2</sup>	Yield (kg/m)		Av. berry weight (g)	Yield (kg/m)		Av. berry weight (g)
		Total	Marketable		Total	Marketable	
4 weeks	62 a	1.1 a	0.6 a	11.3 a	4.4 a	3.0 a	10.8 a
6 weeks	75 b	1.1 a	0.6 a	10.0 b	3.8 ab	2.5 b	10.3 ab
8 weeks	83 c	1.0 a	0.5 a	9.9 b	3.3 b	2.2 b	10.1 b

<sup>1</sup> Values within columns with different letters are significantly different.

<sup>2</sup> Calculated from the planting date to the first harvest date.

<sup>3</sup> Blossoms removed in the first year only.

Funding for this project was provided by the Ontario Berry Growers Association, the Agricultural Adaptation Council CanAdvance Program and the University of Guelph/OMAFRA Enhanced Agreement.

## OBGA Annual Twilight Meeting

**Wednesday September 15th, 4:00pm**  
**Tigchelaar Berry Farm**  
**4606 21<sup>st</sup> Street Vineland, Ontario**  
**Cost \$10.00-\$15.00**

Dan and Jeff Tigchelaar and their families will be our hosts for this event.

As many of you know Jeff and Dan won the ministers award for innovation for their production and marketing of strawberries. This is a great opportunity to observe some innovations in day neutral production. The Tigchelaar's also grow a variety of vegetables for PYO sales at their Binbrook farm.

The twilight meeting is always a popular outing to visit with fellow OBGA members and discuss the trials of the past growing season.

**Confirm your attendance by calling Kevin Schooley at 613-258-4587 or emailing at [info@ontarioberries.com](mailto:info@ontarioberries.com)**

Directions: Exit off the QEW at the Victoria St Exit. If you are travelling towards Niagara you simply turn left at Marina Blvd and turn right once you reach 21<sup>st</sup> St. right

If you are travelling towards Hamilton you will turn left at the North Service Rd then left on Victoria then another left on Marina Blvd. Turn right once you reach 21<sup>st</sup> St.