



August 2016 NEWSLETTER

Presidents Report

Well, another roller-coaster ride of a June bearing season is now behind us. Through communications with several other southern Ontario berry growers it seemed second year crops were lower than usual, while first year crops exceeded expectations. From a harvesting standpoint, a dry June in Southern Ontario made for less disease problem and steady harvests, yet presented growing challenges for other crops.

Myself and the OBGAs vice president Tom Heeman are currently enrolled in AALP class 16- we recently went on a North American Study Tour that took us through Quebec, New York and Washington. Starting in Quebec we learned about how tough of a time the UPA (L'Union des producteurs agricoles du Quebec) is having communicating with the Quebec agricultural minister who has refused to speak with the UPA for the last 14 months. As bad as things can sometimes seem here in Ontario, it's important to be aware of the struggles in other parts of the country and be thankful for certain advantages we have going for us.

Myself, and Tom were also fortunate enough to be included in the Foodland Ontario retailer's awards, where we got to rub shoulders with other commodity group representatives as well as the Ontario Minister of Ag Jeff Leal. We were supposed to be seated at the same table as OFVGA president John Kelly, but were pleasantly informed that John Kelly was specifically asked to switch tables and join Jeff Leal during the Foodland Ontario retailers awards, which is a great sign for fruit and

vegetables that our voice has the potential to fall upon listening ears... listening ears might not seem like much but keep in mind, us farmers account for only 2% of Ontario's population, hopefully we can use this communication to ensure our needs get heard.

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Recently we learned about John Kelly's resignation from the OFVGA, which may put some of the progress he made on hold. There are always positional changes made within the industry that we are not in control of, but we can do our best to better prepare ourselves for future shifts. OFVGA, and other commodity groups are home to numerous experienced agricultural representatives that have a wealth of knowledge on the ins and outs of both political formalities as well as progressive agricultural practices and specific commodity needs. This wealth of knowledge won't be actively involved in our agricultural issues forever, we need to encourage the next generations

to step up into roles that allow them to learn what they can off of seasoned veterans in order to ensure sudden shifts in the governance of commodity groups don't leave us helpless and at a loss for leadership.

Looking forward to seeing everyone at the twilight meeting September 13th at Barrie Hill farms. I'd love to hear your input on these issues.

Kevin Howe, President



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From OBGH Headquarters

The expression "dog days" refers to the hot, sultry days of summer. We have certainly had our share of these days and the forecast looks like we can expect this trend to continue. Most of the areas of the province have suffered through long periods of drought and as berry growers we have seen the result as it has impacted on fruit size, length of season and overall berry quality.

The irrigation companies are likely having one of their busiest years ever and I would expect that this trend will continue into the fall and winter as

growers reassess their needs. Those who have irrigation and a good source of water should be very thankful. Although irrigation is no substitute for natural rainfall it definitely has made the world of difference for those who have it.

Once the crop is off the need for adequate soil moisture does not go away. Growing perennial crops we have to maintain those plants to set fruit for the following year and maintaining optimum growth and good health is paramount.

It seems that every growing season brings new challenges and this year is no different. There is a great opportunity to share your challenges with you fellow growers at this year's Twilight Meeting at Barrie Hill Farms in Barrie. I look forward to seeing many of you at the meeting. Until then try and keep your cool and let's pray for a good rain.

All the best!

Kevin Schooley

Achene Report

As part of the Plant Propagation Program, strawberry plant Verification Trials are conducted at this time here in Ontario at Heeman's, and in Florida. The raspberry plants have been established in New Liskeard. Evaluations are done to make sure the plants are true to type, as well as looking for any plant health issues like viruses.

On June 23rd, some of the members of the Achene Committee met at Heeman's to conduct the evaluation there. The trial was well conducted, and there are no new next steps to take at this time. We thank the Heeman Family for establishing and nurturing this trial. Adam Dale has been to Florida and found everything in order there. The

establishments of these trials, and subsequent evaluations are an important part of the Program.

The Achene Committee will formally meet again in the fall.

Best Regards

Andy Megens
Chair, Achene Committee

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International Strawberry Symposium
August 14-17, 2016
Quebec City, QC www.iss2016-quebec.org

**North American Strawberry Growers
Association Summer Tour**
August 17, 18 2016
Quebec City, Quebec www.nasga.org

Ontario Berry Growers Association
Twilight Meeting
September 13, 2016 4:00 pm
Barrie Hill Farms, Barrie, ON

**North American Strawberry Growers
Association Annual Meeting and
Conference.**
December 5, 6, 2016
Grand Rapids, Michigan www.nasga.org

**North American Raspberry and
Blackberry Association Annual Meeting
and Conference.**

December 5, 6, 2016
Grand Rapids, Michigan
www.raspberryblackberry.com

Great Lakes EXPO
December 6-8, 2016
Grand Rapids, Michigan www.glexpo.com/

OBGA Annual Meeting
February 20, 2017
Embassy Suites, Niagara Falls

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Convention
February 21, 22 2017
Scotiabank Convention Centre, Niagara
Falls www.ofvc.ca

Runner Removal Increases Albion Yields

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

Many growers in Ontario have planted dayneutral strawberries in recent years to take advantage of a longer marketing season. Dayneutral production systems are very different than those we have used for years to produce Junebearing strawberries. For dayneutrals, plants are set at a high density on plastic-mulched, raised beds. Cultural practices are used to produce large multi-crown plants for the greatest fruit production. In most of Ontario, fruit is usually harvested in the first year and the spring of the second year in a modified annual system.

Runner removal is a costly but recommended practise in dayneutral strawberry production. A trial was planted at Cedar Springs in southwestern Ontario and New Liskeard in northeastern Ontario in 2014 to examine the effects of runner removal on harvest distribution, harvest efficiency/recovery, yields and plant growth. Runners were removed weekly starting six weeks after planting, three times a season at six, nine and twelve

weeks after planting, once a season at ten weeks after planting or not at all. The effects of runner removal on yields and plant growth depended on the year, cultivar and site. Runner removal treatments were continued in 2015, however there were few treatment effects on yield in the second year at either site. There were many effects of runner removal in the planting year. This article will concentrate on the effects on yields. At both sites, all fruit was harvested twice a week and sorted into marketable (no rot and regularly shaped with a diameter greater than 1.5 cm) and unmarketable. Fruit in each category was weighed and counted. Berry weights (g/fruit) were calculated for marketable fruit only.

Runner removal increased the yield of Albion in the planting year. Runner removal increased the total and marketable yields of Albion in the planting year at both sites. In Cedar Springs, the total yield of Albion was reduced by 30% when runners were not removed (Table 1).

Table 1. The effects of runner removal at different intervals on the total and marketable yields, and berry weights of Albion and Seascope in Cedar Springs in 2014.

Runner removal treatment	Albion yields 2014 (kg m ⁻¹) ¹⁾		Albion berry wt. (g/berry)	Seascope yields 2014 (kg m ⁻¹)		Seascope berry wt. (g/berry)
	Total	Marketable		Total	Marketable	
Weekly	1.92 a ¹	1.72 a	16.4 a	2.33 a	1.99 a	12.7 a
3 times	1.81 a	1.65 a	15.4 a	1.92 a	1.60 a	12.2 a
1 time	1.90 a	1.60 a	15.9 a	1.96 a	1.65 a	12.3 a
Never	1.32 b	1.21 b	15.6 a	2.12 a	1.83 a	12.3 a

¹ Numbers within a column with different letters are significantly different.

Seascope responded to runner removal only in the more challenging northern climate in New Liskeard. **In the cooler climate, both Albion and Seascope produced greater yields in the planting year with weekly runner removal but not with the less frequent treatments** (Table 2).

Table 2. The effects of runner removal at different intervals on the total and marketable yields of Seascope, and berry weights of Albion and Seascope in New Liskeard in 2014.

Runner removal treatment	Seascope yields 2014 (kg m ⁻¹)		Berry wt. (g/berry)	
	Total	Marketable	Seascope	Albion
Weekly	1.52 a ¹	0.89 a	13.2 a	21.1 a
3 times	1.32 ab	0.76 ab	13.3 a	19.4 ab
1 time	1.23 b	0.60 b	13.3 a	19.7 ab
Never	1.25 b	0.64 b	13.8 a	13.8 b

¹ Numbers within a column with different letters are significantly different.

The timing of runner removal was more critical at the northern site with early, more frequent runner removal giving the best results

Removing runners weekly took almost twice as much time as the other two runner removal treatments at both sites. However, the amount of plant material removed by the once-a-season runner removal treatment was six times that of the other two runner removal treatments. The time recorded for runner removal was the time to cut the stolons from a metre of row and didn't include the time to remove the plant material from

the field. This would be necessary with once-a-season runner removal given the amount of material present. As the work crew also preferred removing younger runners with less plant material, removing runners every week or two may be the best compromise from a labour and yield point of view.



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Marketing Board Update

The OBGA was invited to make a presentation to the Ontario Farm Products Marketing Board in May. Jenn VanDeVelde gave an inspiring presentation and Steve Kustermans from the Ontario Highbush Blueberry Growers Association was enthusiastic in reinforcing the need for the new organization. After answering a number of questions from the board we were told that the Commission would support the proposal and look to conducting a vote this fall to determine if there was grower support.

The Commission asked if we would consider changing the proposed name so that the acronym would not be confused with the Ontario Bean Growers and it was eventually decided

to use the name Berry Growers of Ontario (BGO).

Growers can expect to receive more information through the OBGA and late fall a mail in ballot will be sent by the Commission. Up to date information growers will be posted on the OBGA website under the Growers & Members section. A press release has gone out so you may see more information in the farm press.

OBGA Promotional Items

We had to make an extra order of poly bags so we now have a reasonable quantity in stock if you are running low. Currently we have stock stored near Newcastle and at Strawberry Tyme Farms. Let me know if you would like to purchase a few cases.

OBGA Twilight Meeting

Tuesday September 13, 2016

Barrie Hill Farms

2935 Barrie Hill Rd., Barrie

If you are old enough to remember the last summer tour at Barrie Hill in 1998, you will be amazed at the growth and progress that has taken place since then. Production and marketing of asparagus, strawberries, raspberries, blueberries and other fresh fruit and vegetables has turned Barrie Hill farms into community hub for fresh and local food. <http://www.barriehillfarms.com/>

Many of our members have gotten to know Adrien and Morris Gervais from Barrie Hill Farms. Adrien and Evelyn Gervais purchased the farm in 1968 and grew tobacco until 1979. Getting out of the tobacco industry, strawberries were the first crop, beginning in 1977.

The farm has evolved a lot from their beginning and now boasts 40 acres of blueberries, 30 plus acres of strawberries and 15 acres of raspberries. Those are just the berry crops. Barrie Hill grows a variety of vegetables including a large acreage of asparagus. A new planting of apples has been established as well over the past few years.

As you can see there is lots to see and talk about and after last years record crowd we expect another large gathering..

The OBGAs board will spend some time bringing members up to date on the proposed marketing board for Ontario Berries.

The program starts with a farm tour at 4:00 pm followed by dinner around 6 pm. The cost will be \$15-\$20 per person to cover the cost of dinner. Last year we were able to get some sponsorship dollars to help offset the meal so hopefully we can do the same this year.

Morris has a chef on staff so we should be treated to an excellent meal.

Please RSVP to Kevin Schooley, at 613-258-4587, or info@ontarioberries.com.

Have You Heard? Noise Regulations Change for Farmers in Ontario, New Noise

As of July 1st 2016 all employers in Ontario, including farmers, are required to comply with new workplace noise regulations under the Occupational Health and Safety Act. The [legislation](#) states that farmers and other employers shall ensure that their employees are not exposed to hazardous levels of noise. Hazardous noise, according to the legislation, is 85 dBA or louder, for a

time period of approximately eight hours.

This legislation does not apply to self-employed farmers with no employees.

Summary of Changes

In situations where noise levels are hazardous farmers shall consider the particular circumstances of the situation and use engineering controls, safe work practices and in certain circumstances, provide employees with proper hearing protection devices and necessary training for how to use.

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