

Small Fruit Update



Providing Northwest berry growers with the information they need when they need it.

The Small Fruit Update is sent out weekly during the growing season by [Peerbolt Crop Management](#) and is funded entirely by the Northwest berry growers and industry through their commissions and councils.

February 3, 2015

Week 6

Table of Contents

[Grower Workshops](#)

[National Processed Raspberry Council](#)

[Meetings & Events](#)

[Industry News](#)

- [Department of Labor finally comes to its senses](#) (1/29, Capital Press)
- [Farmworker class action lawsuit could affect farmers, workers](#) (1/25, Tri-city Herald)
- [BEI demise spGurs race to fill blueberry harvester void](#) (12/30, FGN)

[The Weather Cafe](#) by Rufus La Lone [Small Fruit Cold Storage report](#)

Comments on the Northwest berry world (from my perspective...TP):

- **There were two excellent berry events this past week**—The Oregon Blueberry Conference in Portland & the Lower Mainland Horticultural Growers' Short Course in Abbotsford.
- **General comments:** The Northwest berry industry is rapidly evolving, driven by a global berry market integration; continuing 'health glow' news/perception, and cultivar developments. No matter what sector you're involved in you'd be well advised to stay as current as possible. Ignorance of developments could be very costly.
- **Overall issues of greatest concern:**
 - Labor—no surprise there...
 - Weather---also no surprise. We're mild and snow deficient. Besides, it's February—we all get nervous ("not too cold...not too warm...not too wet...not too dry...").
- **Blueberries:**
 - Demand remains very strong and growing.
 - The overall supply & distribution network continues to have growing pains.
 - Larger, vertically integrated companies are becoming more dominant.
 - Many smaller independent growers are finding themselves disadvantaged due to lack of diversification, more stringent (and expensive) regulatory rules/paperwork & just economies of scale. To name a of few causes. Smaller growers need to be especially smart & innovative right now.
- **Processed Raspberries:**
 - Market remains strong and it looks like a very promising year in general.

**Disseminating information for:
Washington**

[Washington Red Raspberry Commission](#)
[Washington Blueberry Commission](#)
[Washington Strawberry Commission](#)

Oregon

[Oregon Raspberry and Blackberry Commission](#)
[Oregon Blueberry Commission](#)
[Oregon Strawberry Commission](#)

British Columbia

[B.C. Strawberry Growers Association](#)
[Raspberry Industry Development Council](#)
[B.C. Blueberry Council](#)

National

[North American Blueberry Council](#)

- Variety development could play a strong role in the near future if the newer, root rot tolerant varieties prove commercially viable. The proprietary cultivar, Wakefield, is also having a major influence on improved overall production and IQF quality. It's a particular advantage to the larger operations that can absorb the added costs associated with a proprietary cultivar.
- The new National Processed Raspberry Council in the U.S. seems to be moving quickly to gain the initiative and could prove to be a major factor in strengthening the domestic market.
- With blueberries taking up so much of the available berry ground in NW Washington and British Columbia (along with pressures from SWD) there isn't much expansion of raspberry acreage occurring in spite of the strong market.
- **Processed Blackberries:**
 - There's a potential for a good 2015 crop right now given last year's weather-related lower yields in some fields that should bounce back strong and this winter's mild conditions. Hopefully we won't have a concentrated harvest which could exacerbate problems with IQF tunnel capacity.
 - I'm not current enough on present market conditions so I won't comment on them, although the long-term outlook for processed blackberries is certainly excellent.
 - Variety development is having a major impact on the industry with commercially viable thornless cultivars now being planted in significant acres. This is leading to a move away from the longtime Marionberry standard. Last year's cold damage in Marions certainly accelerated this trend.
 - The new cultivars also promise improved quality, better yields, more stable supplies, and in general bode well for growers being able to produce a better quality, more economic processed blackberry.
- **Strawberries:**
 - The Northwest processed June bearer strawberry industry is just hamstrung by the lack of a stable labor force. Some buyers want the product which has led to better pricing. We've even got some new cultivars that offer the potential of an improved, more economic product. But there needs to be some type of resolution to the labor issue before this segment of the industry can improve or grow much.
 - The Northwest local fresh market strawberry segment is definitely showing growth signs. Mainly with day neutral varieties. The Albion variety along with buyers wanting more local produce makes for an economic opportunity for some growers.
 - In response to the trends above, all three public strawberry breeding programs (B.C.'s, WSU's and USDA/OSU's) are putting more emphasis on breeding day neutrals for the local fresh market.
- **Upcoming workshops for growers:**
 - **February 11 — NW Center for Alternatives to Pesticides Blueberry Workshop** ~ at the WSU Mt Vernon Research Station, 9-4, [Go here](#) for the agenda and registration details. Topics include organic management options for mummyberry, SWD and weeds.
 - **February 18 — 9th Annual ORBC Production Workshop for Commercial Raspberry and Blackberry Growers** ~ at the Wellspring Conference Center in the Silverton Health Building, 1475 Mt. Hood Ave., Woodburn, OR. [Go here for the draft agenda](#). For more information, call the Peerbolt Crop Management office (503)289-7287 or [email Lora Liegel](#).
 - **New Posting: February 19 — Oregon Strawberry Commission Annual Growers Meeting** ~ at the North Willamette Research and Extension Center, Aurora, OR 9-12:20 followed by lunch. [Go here](#) for the agenda.
 - **March 16-17 — OSU Blueberry School** ~ LaSells Stuart Center, Corvallis. [Go here](#) for the event website. This a great event brought back after a few years "by popular demand". It brings together a whole lot of expertise on northwest blueberries and is for both new and experienced growers. They're also in need of industry sponsors to cover expenses. [Go here](#) for sponsorship information.

Tom Peerbolt, SFU Editor



National Processed Raspberry Council

This newly formed Council is now up and running. They're moving forward with national promotions and health-related research funding very quickly.

- [National Processed Raspberry Council website](#)
The website features a great four minute raspberry video with some of the growers in Whatcom County.
- **The USDA is seeking nominations for the Council.** All of the members' terms would begin on Jan. 1, 2016. For more information or a nomination form, call or email the council's executive director, [Thomas Krugman](#), 360-354-0948. They need to fill:
 - Two producer member and alternate seats from states producing a minimum of 3 million pounds of raspberries for processing.
 - One producer member and alternate seat from all other states producing less than 3 million pounds of raspberries for processing.
 - One importer member and alternate seat
 - One foreign producer member and alternate seat.
 - In addition to the above, the following seats are currently vacant and need to be filled: One importer alternate seat and one public member and alternate seat for terms ending Dec. 31, 2016.
- **New Posting: May 18-19 — National Processed Raspberry Council meeting** ~ at the Semiahmoo Resort in Blaine, WA. [Go here](#) to make hotel reservations or call phone 360-318-2000. Be sure to identify yourself as part of the National Processed Raspberry Council. For more information, please contact Tom Krugman, 360-354-0948, TKrugman@redrazz.org
- **Fruit Grower News article:** [Raspberry council seeking nominees](#) (1/28, FGN)

Other Upcoming National Berry Events

- **February 24-27 — North American Raspberry & Blackberry Association Annual Conference** ~ Fayetteville, Arkansas. Includes tour of U Arkansas blackberry breeding research (Dr. John R. Clark). For more information, contact info@raspberryblackberry.com or visit www.raspberryblackberry.com.
- **February 24-27 — North American Blueberry Council and the US Highbush Blueberry Council Spring Meetings** ~ Walt Disney World Swan and Dolphin, Lake Buena Vista, Florida. [Go here](#) for the Feb 24 optional tour info; [go here](#) for the meeting schedule; [go here](#) for the registration form.

Commission Meetings This Week

[Go here for Full Event Calendar](#)

- **New Posting: February 10 — Washington Blueberry Commission Quarterly meeting** ~ at the Hampton Inn (1860 South Burlington Blvd), Burlington, WA. [Go here](#) for details.
- **New Posting: February 10 — Oregon Raspberry and Blackberry Commission meeting** ~ Committee meetings start at 10 am, regular Commission meeting at 12 pm. For the agenda, [click here](#). Call 541-758-4043 or email Philip Gutt for more information.



Industry news/resources

Commission News

- [Washington Blueberry Commission News](#) (2/2)
- [Oregon Raspberry and Blackberry Commission News](#)

Newsletters/ berry reports

- [Whatcom Ag Monthly](#) *Produced by WSU Whatcom County Extension. Includes excellent berry crop information.*
- [National Berry Report](#) *Daily fresh market berry reports. Hosted by the California Strawberry Commission, this report is generated from data from the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service and is updated daily.*

Magazine/website compilations

- **The Packer:** [blueberries](#), [blackberries](#), [raspberries](#), [strawberries](#).
- **Growing Produce:** [recent berry articles](#).
- **Fruitnet-Eurofruit:** [recent berry articles](#).
- **Fresh Fruit Portal:** [blueberries](#), [blackberries](#), [raspberries](#), [strawberries](#).

Berry research blogs

- [Strawberries and Caneberries](#) by Mark Bolda, UC Davis Berry Extension Agent. **Recent entry (1/24):** **“Worms” in strawberry field soils: No threat to plants** *Reports on recent insect and disease research and observations in California.*
- [Team Rubus](#) by Gina Fernandez, North Carolina State Small Fruit Specialist. **Recent entry (1/22):** **Blackberry Chilling Update** *Reports on issues in blackberries and raspberries from the Southeast.*

Climate/Water

- Oregon: [Water supply outlook bleak for Eastern Oregon farmers](#) (2/2, Capital Press)
- California: [Low snow readings bring sense of doom to growers](#) (1/30, Capital Press)
- Oregon: [Snowpack at record lows](#) (1/30, Capital Press)
- Northwest: [Drier winters in store for region, weatherman predicts](#) (1/29, Capital Press)

Regulatory Agencies

- [Blueberry growers settle with Department of Labor for over \\$130,000 over farmworker pay orders](#) (1/20, Oregonian)
- [Feds, blueberry growers settle 'hot goods' case](#) (1/21, The Packer)
- [Obama proposes new agency to make food safer](#) (2/2, Capital Press)

Labor

- Washington: [New state minimum wage? Why some foreign guests earn \\$3 more](#) (1/20, Seattle Times)

Marketing

- [Is local the new organic?](#) (1/29, bakemag)

Technology

- [2015 Precision Ag product review](#) (1/26, Precision Ag)
- [10 best new agriculture apps for 2015](#) (1/12, Precision Ag)
- [A framework for managing information in Precision Ag](#) (1/24, Precision Ag)
- [New data management tool to build success on farms](#) (1/30, Ag Professional)

Business

- Sakuma Brothers Farms Blog: [2015 New Year's Message](#) (1/29)
- [Cal Giant's Anthony Gallino discusses strawberry pricing](#) (1/27, Andnowyouknow)

Research/Plant Breeding

- [RosBREED 2 Program focuses on disease resistance and quality](#) (1/19, Growing Produce)
- [New black raspberry available](#) (1/30, FGN)

The West

- [California strawberry acreage to decline slightly in 2015](#) (1/20, Capital Press)

International

Mexico

- [First Mexican blackberries and raspberries arrive in China](#) (1/26, Fresh Fruit Portal)
- [Mexican berry growers prepare for first China-bound shipments](#) (1/20, Fresh Fruit Portal)
- [Domestic berry consumption decreases](#) (1/23, Fresh Plaza)

Chile

- [“So far demand in Europe for Chilean blueberries greater than last year”](#) (1/25, Fresh Plaza)

Europe

- [Spanish blackberries gaining presence in Europe](#) (1/30, Fresh Plaza)

China

- [China’s cold chain is improving](#) (1/27, Good Fruit Grower)
- [China eyes food safety, modern farms in 2015 rural policy](#) (2/1, Reuters)

Other

- Australia: [Sale of blueberry farm to Chinese interests denied](#) (2/2, Fresh Plaza)
- Morocco: [Moroccan berry growers look for niche in European market](#) (1/23, Fresh Plaza)



Archived Small Fruit Updates

(For older Updates [go here.](#))

[04-SFU01-20-15](#)

[02-SFU01-06-15](#)

[49-SFU12-01-14](#)