

2003 Blackberry Evaluation

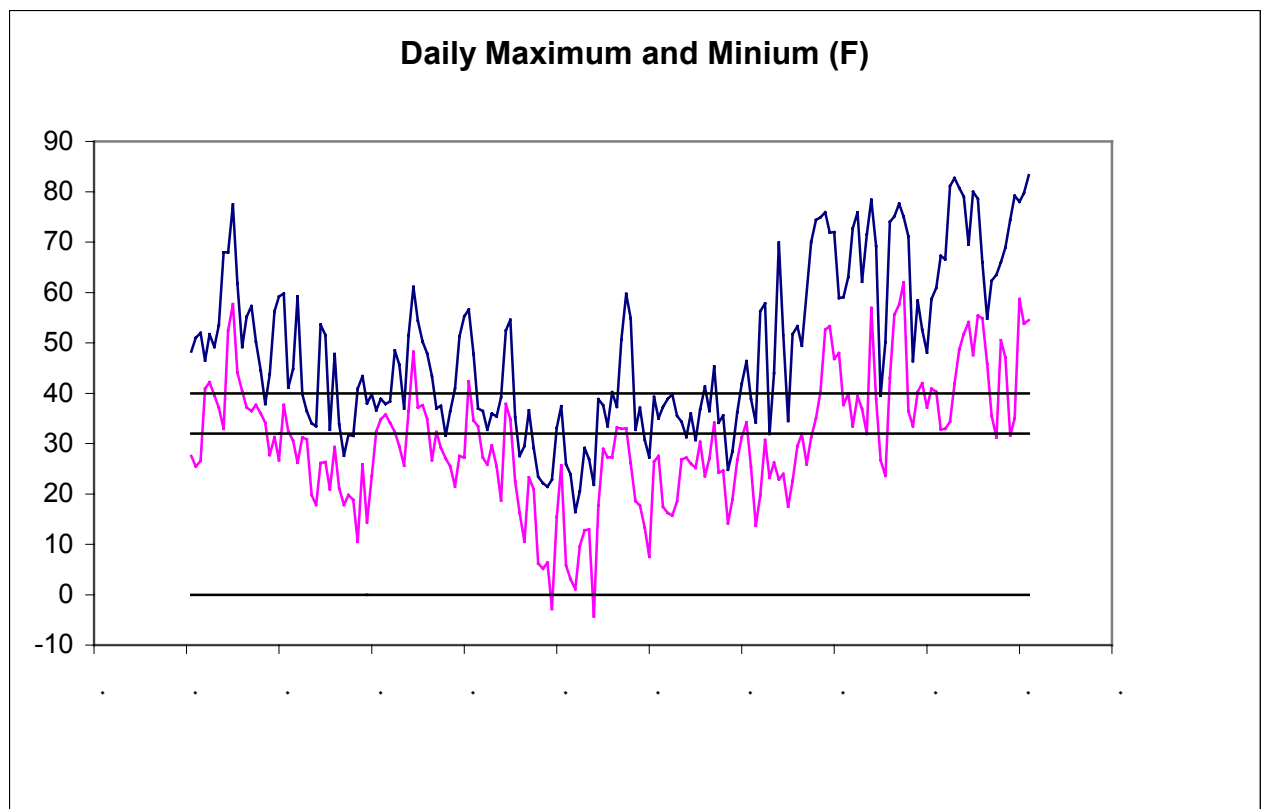
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Introduction:

Five varieties of thornless blackberries, four varieties of thorny blackberries, and two wyeberries, were planted May 26, 2000 at the Van Meter Farm in the Scioto River Valley. Soils at the site are predominantly Huntington silt loam. Thornless varieties (Apache, Arapaho, Chester, Navaho, and Triple Crown) were planted on 5 foot spacing; thorny varieties (Chesapeake, Chickasaw, Kiowa, and Shawnee) and wyeberries (QDE-1 and QDE-2) were planted on 3 foot spacing. Recommended pest control measures were followed to control weeds, insects, and disease.

The winter of 2002-2003 (figure 1) was colder than the previous two years with moderate snow cover. Consequently we had more winter damage and lower yields than in the previously. The snow cover did provide some insulation to the crowns of the plant and generally prevented complete dieback.

Figure 1.



Results

This is only the second year of data collection and it is difficult to make any recommendations based upon two years of data. Location within the planting was significant.

Table 1. Average yields (lbs/plant) and coefficient of variation.

	A	B	C	D	overall	CV
Wyeberry						
QDE-1	0.49	0.58	0.63	0.67	0.61	12.9
QDE-2	0.23	0.72	0.75	2.22	0.98	87.5
Thorny						
Chesapeake	0.18	0.42	1.39	1.58	0.89	78.1
Chickasaw	0.97	1.08	1.57	4.85	2.12	110.7
Kiowa	0.01	0.09	0.67	0.97	0.44	105.5
Shawnee	0.09	0.61	0.73	1.39	0.70	76.1
Thornless						
Arapaho	0.02	0.11	0.48	0.61	0.31	93.9
Apache	1.55	2.10	2.64	5.62	2.98	45.1
Chester	6.42	9.34	10.3	14.8	10.22	33.7
Navaho	0.35	0.82	0.97	3.01	1.29	88.9
Triple Crown	0.01	0.03	0.40	0.41	0.21	105.4

Wyeberries

QDE-2 had better yield than QDE-1 in 2002 and 2003. The wyeberries have been removed from the trial because the color and taste were less than desirable for our markets. Harvest of QDE-2 began on June 24th 2003, 3 days sooner than in 2002 and continued until August 6th two weeks later than in 2002. Harvest of QDE-1 began on June 30th (5 days later than in 2002) and ended on August 6th, two weeks later than in 2002.

Thorny

Chickasaw was consistently the #1 producer for the thorny varieties. Kiowa performed well in 2002, but did not do well in 2003. It should be noted that Kiowa is the last of the thorny varieties to harden off in the Autumn. Harvest of Chesapeake, Chickasaw, and Shawnee began on July 2nd. Chesapeake and Shawnee were approximately 1 week later than in 2002. Kiowa harvest began on July 16th, two weeks later than in 2002. Final harvest for all thorny blackberries was August 13th, 3 weeks later than in 2002.

Thornless

Chester was the top yielding variety of thornless in both 2002 and 2003. Triple Crown performance dropped the most from 2002 to 2003 however it does have excellent taste, which may indicate that it has a place in a planting. Harvest of thornless varieties began

with Arapaho on June 30th the same as last year. Navaho and Triple Crown harvest was ten days later and began at the same time as Apache and Chester. There was approximately a 5-week harvest period for all thorny except for Chester, which continued producing until September 4.

Conclusions

Blackberries are a fruit that is recognized by the consumer, has been reported to have health benefits, and can be produced on small acreage. These characteristics may make blackberries a crop that fits within your business plan.

Chester Thornless was the most consistent variety of the blackberries in our trial and had the longest harvest season and greatest yield in 2002. The wyeberry, QDE-1, had the most consistent yield from plot to plot; that may be related to its trailing growth form that resulted in the majority of the canes being covered in snow for a great portion of the winter.

Further evaluation of these varieties will continue for a number of years to determine the role they have in blackberry production systems in southern Ohio, however the wyeberries have been removed because of a lack of appeal to our evaluators.