

SARE Interim Report

Investigating the commercial viability of growing organic black currants in the Northeast

FNE02-420

Project Goals:

- 1) To determine if black currants can be grown successfully with organic production methods in this climate.
- 2) To test 3 varieties for yield and quality of juice, wine and jelly.
- 3) To find out what kind of pests will be a problem here.
- 4) Develop the information, experience and marketing information to put in a successful larger scale planting.

The Farm Between is still a small scale diversified farm, specializing in organic small fruits and vegetables, and pastured poultry. We have recently added breeding stock for piglet production and a team of draft horses for field work.

Cooperators have not been active yet.

Three varieties of black currant were planted in 2002 into a field that was overwintered rye and hairy vetch. Composted manure was added at planting. The three varieties (Titania, Ben Sarek, and Ben Lomond) were planted in randomized block design with 4 replicates of 12 plants each.

The currants seem to have successfully overwintered twice and look healthy despite some 30-40 below zero nights the past two winters. The Titania bore a small amount of fruit in the first season. The second season they bore again, but still less than 1 pint /bush. Sales were made to Grand View Winery and a local restaurant. Interest from wineries, chefs and processed food producers seems high.

Everything is going well and by the plan so far. I have found some literature on pruning and am in the process of pruning now (as the snow cover has receded). I bought an irrigation system this past summer, but due to good rainfall distribution was not pressed to put it in. I will install it this spring ('04). We are anticipating yield trials and experimenting with value added products (wine, jam, jelly and juice) this summer.

Due to high interest by potential buyers, I am planning on extending my plantings this summer.

Thank you.

John Hayden
3/8/04