

LINGONBERRY AN ALTERNATIVE SMALL FRUIT CROP

Third Year Report *and final report*

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Goals:

The project will establish a trial planting of Lingonberries, an alternate small fruit crop that was a native North American fruit. The project will trial the Lingonberry as a crop suited for Northeast farm growing conditions and as a product to be directly marketed by the grower.

The Third Year:

After three years, the Lingonberries have not successfully taken hold and established themselves. The original plantings are following the trends they established when first planted: the Red Pearl plants are the only variety that has shown any real staying ability. The Erntesegen and Sana continue to loose plants each winter. Even the Red Pearl are set back each winter and need to re-establish themselves in the spring. A variety of mulches and mulching techniques have been used to try to aid the plants in overwintering. A mulch layer of hay is applied in the early winter, around the end of December and is not removed at all in the spring. The plants grow into the mulch and do not respond well to removal of the mulch.

The plants were moved early this spring to a new location that is on an east facing hillside that is surrounded by a stone wall. The hope is that the stone and hill will provide some additional winter protection and the plants will do better in this location.

There are still no insect pests noticed on the plants and by mid summer there are quite a few runners that have grown out around the plants. There has been no fruit production to date.

A Few Observations.

We have tried every variable that is available to us to help the plants establish themselves, but have not been successful. I continually feel that the plants are lacking something that we have not provided for the plants to be really healthy and vibrant. This need might be a relationship that comes from a specific environment and growing condition such as proximity to another plant species that we are not providing.

Winter is always a set back period for the plants. There is browning of leaves and some plants completely die. Mulch is essential and we continue to fertilize the plants with fish emulsion.

The plants are much smaller than what we expected and hand labor would be a cost and consideration for harvesting. I still feel there is a market for the fruit, but more work would have to be done to determine proper growing conditions.

We will continue to care for the plants and hopefully the new location will better suit their needs. If we get a crop, I will notify the office and provide an update.

I keep looking around to find clues to make changes or additions to the plantings to provide the plants with what they need. The woods around the farm are loaded with native ground covers such as wintergreen berry, partridge berry and highbush blueberry. It seems like the Lingonberries would also grow on this farm. Again that nagging feeling that we are missing one ingredient that the plants require. We'll keep looking and experimenting.

Thank you for this opportunity and educational experience.

Sincerely,

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