LINGONBERRY AS AN ALTERNATIVE SMALL FRUIT CROP
First Year Report
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Goals:
The project will establish a trial planting of Lingonberries, an alternative 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.

Farm information:
The location of the lingonberry planting was a site that was prepared the fall previous for to be planted with blueberries. The previous fall wood shavings and compost had been plowed into the soil. The soil tested 5.2 pH.
Since planting the lingonberries more wooded area around the lingonberries has been cleared and readied for blueberries. Total sunlight hours has increased for the lingonberry planting.

Cooperators:
For the first year I planted and cared for the plants. The Cooperative Extension Agent has made a site visit. In addition I have spoken with Marvin Pritts, Small Fruit Specialist with Cornell University about the planting. At this point there seems to be little information available about Lingonberries.

How Project was carried out:
The plants ordered were form Hartmanns Plantation in Wisconsin. It was a challenge to find suppliers of Lingonberry plants, although now I do see Lingonberries listed in other nursery stock catalogs and advertisements.

Three varieties were ordered and each was ordered in 4" pots and tissue culture plugs. This was an experiment as well to see how much longer it would take tissue culture plugs to catch up with the established plants. The tissue culture plugs were much less expensive than the plants and this could be very important economically for a grower. What I received was somewhat of a mish-mosh of plants in different sized pots along with the tissue culture plugs.
Red Pearl: Plants were healthiest looking and were in 4" pots. The tissue culture plugs ordered in Red Pearl came with the name Wisconsin 102.
Erntesegen: No plants, only tissue culture plugs were sent.
Koralle: Plants and tissue culture plugs came with the name Sana Lingonberry.
These might be crosses, new varieties, no explanation was given.

All plants were planted 8" apart with rows 48" apart except for

the Erntesegen which were all tissue culture plugs and were planted 6" apart. I wasn't sure how well these very small plants would do and how many would survive.

The plants were much smaller than what I had expected. The TCP were tiny 2" tall spindly plants with a few leaves on each plant. The plants had very little root growth and I felt apprehensive planting the TCPs.

The plants were all mulched with additional wood shavings and watered as needed over the summer. We had a very wet summer and so irrigation was not such an issue as it would have been during a very dry summer. Over the winter boughs of evergreens were cut and laid over the plants. The boughs were removed in the early spring. The plants for the most part look alive and seem to be thriving.

The Red Pearl looks the best. The tissue culture plugs are almost the same size as the plants that came in pots. The potted plants are already sending out side shoots, and I do not see that with the tissue culture plugs. The Sana plants and plugs look to be growing, but not as well as the Red Pearl. The Erntesegen which was only sent in TCP are still very small and there was the greatest number of lost plants over the winter with the Erntesegen.

Economic Findings:
The plants were smaller and more expensive than I thought they would be, but I had never seen a Lingonberry before last spring. The TCPs seem to be catching up to the potted, more expensive plants with very little winter die back. When there will finally be berries seems to be at least another season away.

New Ideas about what is needed to solve the problem:
I feel more comfortable with blueberries than the Lingonberries and would and am putting in another .5 acre of blueberries. In addition I wanted the Lingonberries to round out a small fruit planting for direct market. Every thing I can find out about marketing Lingonberries seems to be that the berries are made into a sauce. At first I had the idea that the sauce was just the most popular way of serving the berries. Now I have been wondering if the berries might have such a short shelf life that the only way to use them is to make a sauce that can be bottled. This will be answered when I finally have berries to harvest.

Continue to use the practice?
At this point I wouldn't plant more Lingonberries until I can see what the result of the plantings I have in already. They seem to need more tender care than blueberries, simply because the plant size is so small.

Outreach:
At this point the results are inconclusive and so I have not spoken to any groups or individuals or written an articles. I have been taking slides that will help with the presentation when it is complete.