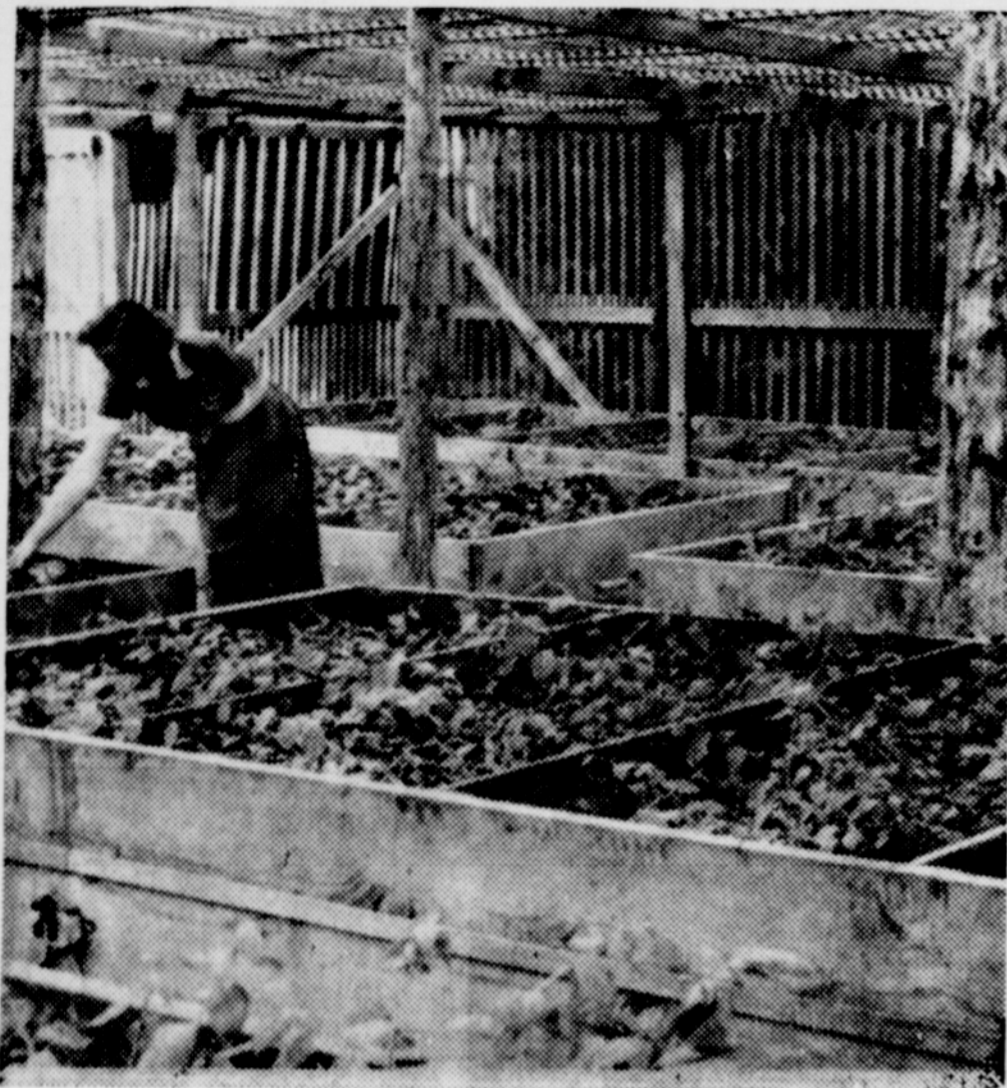


Be Made Profitable Industry Quickly Blueberry Culture In Curry County Can

By George D. Asdel, Oregon Coast Berry Company, Port Orford

More and more frequently, growers of bulbs, berries and other horticultural crops in Oregon, as well as week-end farmers, are inquiring about possibilities of starting blueberry plantings to diversify their farming. They are finding that this crop, which is comparatively new here, has much to recommend it.



Mrs. Dorothy Asdel, who helps her husband in propagation of the blueberries in their nursery at Port Orford, is shown working in the "lattice hot-house," where berries get their first growth.

Investigation shows that the market has a stable outlook and will remain firm long into the future. Fresh market demand for the fruit has never, as yet, been satisfied and gives little promise of being fulfilled for some years to come. In addition, canners are not able to obtain all of the berries they could use simply because enough acreage is not in production.

Packers of frozen foods are seeking further sources of blueberry supply and are encouraging the setting out of test plots in many areas.

The Pacific Northwest Blueberry Growers Association of Puyallup, Wash., has made a small percentage of the crop available for canning for the last two seasons in order to start developing this outlet. This year a similar program was started for freezing. Local and distant fresh markets could, no doubt, absorb all fruit produced for some time. However, it seems wise to develop other outlets before heavy production is reached.

It has been proven that blueberries have superior shipping qualities and can be shipped for a week, remaining fresh and marketable. This opens considerable area for distribution in the south and east as well as the western states with their large metropolitan centers. Wholesale buyers in the market places of many cities jump at the chance to buy almost any number of flats of blueberries during the picking season. There is always some market for the fruit in the locality of the grower for home canning and jam-making also.

When plants are mature, crop are large—an producing on the average of four tons if properly cared for. One planting of several acres in Washington has averaged more than six tons per acre year after year. This insures a good income even if the prices decline somewhat in years to come as more hundreds of acres, as yet unplanted, come into bearing. The last three years prices have held steady through-

out the entire season. The farmer has received \$3.50 per flat of 12 14-ounce boxes packed for the fresh market or \$440 per ton to processors.

Most tillable soils in western Oregon are suitable for blueberry culture if they are at least slightly acid. Blueberries have been grown successfully on a wide range of types. Near Corvallis there is one profitable producing planting on hilltop clay, which has been lightened with sawdust. However, soils ranging from peat and muck types to good quality bench and bottom land are usually considered to be more suitable. It cannot be too strongly emphasized that care given plants has been shown to be more important than soil type. The most important phase of this care is proper moisture. Irrigation is required in nearly all locations.

Property values are increased immediately when blueberries are planted because of the potential productivity. Values continue to grow as plants mature, bringing considerable security to the blueberry farmer. Once they reach maturity blueberry plants maintain a steady high yield for many years. They do not normally have to be replanted within the farmer's lifetime.

One drawback to blueberry farming is the length of time it takes to realize a return on one's investment. A small crop is usually realized when plants are four years old. By that time the plants have grown to about half of their mature size if care has been taken to remove blossoms the first three years so that growth goes to the plant and not to fruit. Full maturity is usually reached in the eighth to 15th year, depending on care given and growing conditions. However, commercially profitable crops are ordinarily made when the plant is five or six years old. Of course, the older the plant when set out, the sooner they reach this point.

Investment can be little or much, according to the amount

of acreage and the age of the plants set out. An acre of plants can be purchased for as little as \$225 for a good selection of small, one-year-old rooted cuttings that must be nursery grown for at least a year before being set out in the field. About \$1000 per acre will buy three-year-old plants which should bear a small crop the second year, if planted carefully.

It is recommended by most blueberry propagators that care be taken in selecting the more recent varieties to be flavorful, productive, hardy and easy to care for. These better varieties—Jersey, Stanley, Pemberton, Dixi, Atlantic—are driving the older ones off the fresh market.

If given a little thought it is seen to be desirable for beginners

in blueberries to be established farmers or have an income from another source that will tide time over the years until the blueberry plants come into bearing. It is suggested that plantings be on a scale large enough to be worth while and to demand the proper attention but not too big as each grower will learn much the first year or two and will be better able to properly handle a larger planting after gaining some experience.

Two new varieties, Berkeley and Coville, have been released by the U. S. Department of Agriculture and are being tested by western colleges and propagators. It is not considered wise for the public to plant these varieties as yet.

Additional information may be

obtained from C. A. Boller of Oregon State College, Corvallis; Dr. C. D. Schwartz of Western Washington Experiment Station at Puyallup; your county agent and Oregon Coast Berry Company, Port Orford, Oregon.

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