

Contract

Cedar Hill's Bramble Education - #18-013-075 - \$1,530

Contact

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Issue of Interest

In the application we had referred to the high quality of wines that are made by the Nebraska wineries, the demand for fruit wines, and the lack of availability of Nebraska grown fruit for such wines. In our tasting room, the fruit wines were some of the highest selling wines, and they were priced higher than the grape wines. Not only do we, as a business, sell the fruit wines, but we also sell fruit at local farmers' markets, where there is also more demand for fruit than producers. In visiting with people, we have discovered that many people don't know how to grow brambles, but were interested in learning. We offered two workshops in the spring of 2009 and had 25 attendees. In addition, another 25 called for information, but were unable to attend and wanted more information regarding growing raspberries and blackberries.

Because of the movement to buy fresh, buy local, and eat healthier, a need was identified for an educational program to bring more people into the production of brambles in the state.

We asked each attendee to fill out an evaluation sheet at the workshop as to topics they wished to be addressed. According to these evaluations, their needs were met. Desired topics included how to grow brambles, network with others, marketing options, pruning, trellising, and disease information.

Approach to Problem

The issue was approached by involving an array of experts in the field such as an extension educator, RC&D retired coordinator, master gardener, and educator. In the group, there were also attendees that had already planted brambles and shared their knowledge with others. We had reference materials and handouts for the participants. A primary focus point was the marketing possibilities and monetary rewards for growing brambles.

Goals/Achievement of Goals

The goals of the project were to provide the education needed in order to enable participants to raise brambles successfully and have more individuals plant brambles. These were both accomplished and were just the tip of the iceberg for having more brambles produced in Nebraska, with the possibility of more fruit going into wine for Nebraska fruit wines. The presenters covered all aspects of the history of brambles, types, growing habits, pruning, trellising, disease, and marketing.

Two eight-hour workshops on two separate days were provided in the spring of 2009, with 25 attendees.

Results, Conclusions, Lessons Learned

Some of the results and comments found on the conducted survey were:

- Sixteen will use for personal use, five for commercial.
- Of the participants attending, eight currently grew brambles (1,225 plants total). Others who attended intend to plant in the future. The availability in May was very limited, so that all who wanted to plant may not have been able to find plants. I checked with several nurseries, and they were all sold out for that season.
- Other comments were as follows: “Good info, good networking,” “Hands on experience was great,” “Interesting,” “Need research in Nebraska on varieties,” “Very informative,” “Enjoyed the entire day & plan to start raspberries soon,” and, “Very well done.”

Many of the attendees were also interested in having more workshops on other small fruit and fruit trees.

Overall, the workshop was a success. The workshop sparked interest and helped those already with plots to have a future with their current plants. It also provided those who attended with some options. Doing another workshop in the fall may be a possibility for us, so others can see the plants producing.

Progress According to Outcome Measures

We conducted a follow-up survey this winter and of those who responded an additional 925 plants have been planted in the following counties: Howard, Saline, Burt, Lincoln, Buffalo, and Keith. There are still some who attended that intend to plant in the spring of 2010. We will have more information concerning this in the summer of 2010, at which time we will follow-up with another survey addressing winter survival of the 2009 plantings. Some of the plants of those surveyed had berries, but first year production is always small, if any. Some of the participants spent this year getting their ground ready, getting soil tests, and killing perennial weeds in order to plant this spring. We are helping these people with more information on their specific plots. One respondent that is currently growing some berries and indicated that their raspberries were their best fruit crop in 2009. Some also sent their blackberries to a winery and used the raspberries in jams, pies, and froze many unused berries.

The plans for some of those that planted are to use them for farmers' markets and roadside stands, not to mention personal use.

We were able to purchase raspberries this year from an attendee, who was already growing some raspberries to use in our Nebraska Raspberry Passion Wine. With this, it was possible to double the amount of raspberry wine produced this year compared to the prior year. Cedar Hills is currently in the process of applying for a farm winery license which will specialize in Nebraska fruit wines, particularly brambles and other small fruits). Currently, a majority of Nebraska wines are grape. As more fruits come to the winery, we will be able to measure the long-term outcomes from this bramble workshop. We will be mentoring many attendees, as well as others interested in bramble production.