

Workshop Title: Growing Saskatoons and Ideas for Organic Production

Speaker and their title: Bob Bors, Univeristy of Saskatchewan

Executive Summary: An overview of how to grow organic saskatoons using a mechanical harvester.

About Saskatoons:

Saskatoons are also called Serviceberry, Juneberry, Shadbush and Indian Pear, Chuckly Pear

They're related to the apple. Get most of the same diseases too. Apple flavour and some have some almond flavour.

Firm fruit. Dark skin, with green, white or pink flesh.

Problem: They tear when you pick them; limits it on the fresh market. Also seedy.

Self-compatible (need only one variety)

All varieties have uneven ripening. However, when you use a machine with some varieties, you can shake them lightly and mostly ripe ones will fall. Often have to hand sort.

Tends to grow too tall to pick. Size and shape of bush is highly variable.

Varieties:

- Northline (spreads out in shape a lot, smaller fruit)
- Theissen (grows upright, large fruit, but it quickly grows out of control and plants are too tall. More disease problems)
- Smoky (oldest variety, has more almond flavour)

Saskatoons fruit before apples and after plums. At U of Saskatchewan, lose some every 7 years to frost.

Biggest disease problems:

Entomosporium

Saskatoon/Juniper Rust

Fireblight

Key Concept:

Mechanical harvester is worth it if you have 40 acres of fruit.

Potential for disease to spread when using mechanical harvester that damages plant.

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Many organic growers have failed because of disease. Non-organic growers have failed cause they don't have a marketing plan.

Try planting alternate rows of Saskatoons and cherries to stop disease spread.

Questions:

Q: How do you prep the land for Northline? I planted 10 and they didn't do well at all.

A: Really have to be careful with weed competition. Grass growing around the base of a fruit tree or bush will suppress growth significantly.

Q: Is there a lower tech version for sorting?

A: Using a blanket to roll them down. The leaves will tend to stay and the fruit goes to the bottom.