

Caneberry I

Tuesday morning 9:00 am

Where: Gallery Overlook (upper level) Room A & B

MI Recertification credits: 2 (1C, COMM CORE, PRIV CORE)

CCA Credits: PM(0.5) CM(1.5)

Moderator: Jim Jedele, Berry Hill Farm, Dexter, MI

- 9:00 am Grower Spotlight: K and K Farms
- Fred and Linda Koenigshof, K and K Farms, Coloma, MI
- 9:40 am Bramble Varieties for Today and Tomorrow
- Nate Nourse, Nourse Farms, Deerfield, MA
- 10:15 am Arkansas Blackberry Varieties - What Are People Planting and Why
- John Clark, Department of Horticulture, Univ. of Arkansas
- 11:00 am How the National Clean Plant Network Helps Growers
- Yannis Tzanetakakis, Plant Pathology, Univ. of Arkansas
- 11:20 am Virus Diseases and Their Management
- Bob Martin, USDA-ARS Corvallis, OR
- 12:00 noon Session Ends

Arkansas Blackberry Varieties – What Are People Planting and Why?

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The University of Arkansas has been breeding blackberries since 1964. A number of varieties have been released. These can be divided up in several categories, including thorny or thornless, and floricane- or primocane-fruiting. As with any long-term breeding program, most older varieties lose favor with growers, often due to better varieties becoming available. The information shared highlights the most popular varieties in sales of the University's patented varieties, based on reported propagation and sales among licensees. The vast majority of this information is from the United States, with occasional impacts from other countries.

Thornless, Floricane-fruiting Varieties

Ouachita. Many have heard me share in grower meetings in the last few years, that if you are going to consider one Arkansas variety, Ouachita is my recommendation. Released in 2003, it has been the true workhorse for growers, largely in the South but also into the Midwest and West. Sales from 2010-2016 are just over 2,000,000 plants, the most of any Arkansas floricane variety. Its highest sales during this period were in 2015 with just under a half a million plants sold. Its key attributes are wide adaptation, high quality berries, good postharvest handling, and consistent yields. It does not commonly have negative characteristics reported. It continues to be a top choice.

Natchez. Released in 2007, Natchez continues to be popular. Just over 1.3 million plants of this variety have been sold since its release seven years ago. As with Ouachita, the highest sales year was 2015 with over 275,000 plants sold. Natchez is an eye-catching berry with its large size and long shape. It also is high yielding and ripens early. The biggest negatives with Natchez have been reports of tart berries. I have experienced this also in testing in Arkansas, but have also noticed that berries usually are sweeter after the first week of harvest. It remains one of my favorite varieties for flavor, but I have to admit that filling up the container quickly continues to be exciting. I highly recommend that Natchez be carefully managed for crop load. It can easily set an excessive crop, develop few leaves and new primocanes, resulting in very tart, non-sweet berries.

Apache. This 1999-released variety continues to have consistent sales of 70,000 to 90,000 plants per year, making it the third most popular Arkansas variety in sales from 2010-2016. Although older, it continues to have a strong following. Merits are later season ripening, large, high-quality berries, and healthy plants. The biggest disadvantage of Apache has been a tendency to develop white drupes on berries, plus is high chilling. The white drupe tendency substantially damaged the variety in the shipping market. There have been reports of reducing light exposure using the rotatable crossarm or shift trellis having a major positive impact on white drupe occurrence. It continues to be one to consider with the white drupe issue being addressed through plant management.

Osage. This is the newest thornless, floricane-fruiting variety released from the program, hitting the market in 2013. Sales in its four-year marketing life are over 300,000 plants, with up to nearly 150,000 plants sold in 2015. This variety is still at the trial stage with growers, as they assess its performance in various environments. Attributes of Osage are good flavor, very high plant health, diversification of varieties, and good yields. Disadvantages include strong competition with Ouachita, and a slightly smaller berry size compared to Ouachita.

Navaho. The patent on Navaho expired several years ago, so plant sales statistics are not available for this first thornless variety from the Arkansas program. In 2008, it sold just over 130,000 plants, higher than Natchez but substantially below Ouachita. Although sales figures are available, it likely continues to be

planted particularly as a later, high-quality variety particularly in the upper South. Major disadvantages of Navaho are susceptibility to orange rust disease and only moderate berry size.

Thorny, Floricane-fruiting varieties

Kiowa. This variety was released in 1996 and continues to be the highest seller in the thorny, floricane-fruiting group. Sales averaged about 30,000 plants per year since 2010. Most growers shy away from thorny plants. However, Kiowa has very large berries which help keep it active in the market, as well as being the lowest chilling variety among the floricane fruiterers.

Primocane-Fruiting Varieties

Prime-Ark® 45. This innovative variety has been the top seller since 2010, largely due to its ability to produce fruit in the late summer and fall on current-season canes. Over 2.5 million plants have been sold during this time, and likely a majority have been planted in California. This variety has been so popular due to fruiting at a time when few blackberries have been on the market, and prices have usually been higher. Although thorny, Prime-Ark® 45 is popular due to large berries, good flavor and quality, and high productivity in moderate summer climates. It also can be managed to produce a primocane and floricane crop, at least in certain climates and with proper management. Reversion, or the development of red drupes on berries, has been one drawback to this variety. This has been reported mainly in California.

Prime-Ark® Freedom. The first thornless, primocane-fruiting variety, Prime-Ark® Freedom has mainly been targeted for the home garden or local market sector. Released in 2013, sales have surpassed 200,000 plants thus far. Merits are large berries with good flavor, in addition to the major traits of primocane fruiting and thornless. However, Prime-Ark® Freedom has not performed well in postharvest storage, thus it not being highly recommended for the commercial shipping market.

Prime-Ark® Traveler. The newest release from the Arkansas program, Prime-Ark® Traveler combines, thornlessness, primocane fruiting, and good postharvest handling. It has sold over 150,000 plants since its 2014 release, so is just getting started in the marketplace. It is hoped that it will add a quality choice for commercial growers of blackberries for the late summer to fall harvest season. One challenge it has will be to match yields of the highly productive Prime-Ark® 45.

References and Related Information

Arkansas blackberry licensed propagators can be found at http://www.uaex.edu/farm-ranch/crops-commercial-horticulture/horticulture/docs/CommHort_blackberries-Licensed-Propagators-UofA-Patent.pdf

Arkansas variety information can be found at <http://www.uaex.edu/farm-ranch/crops-commercial-horticulture/horticulture/fruits.aspx>

Clark, J.R. 2015. Arkansas blackberry varieties, planting trends. The Bramble, Newsletter of the North American Raspberry and Blackberry Assn 30(3); 9-11.

Clark, J.R. 2015. Breeding southern blackberries: Idea to industry. Acta Hort. 1133:3-11.

Clark, J.R. 2016. Primocane-fruiting blackberries: the story grows. 2016. The Bramble, Newsletter of the North American Raspberry and Blackberry Assn 31(2); 7-8.