

# Wild Blueberry Newsletter



July 2009

## WILD BLUEBERRY CROP PROSPECTS

**Maine** - The crop in Maine could be an above average one this year. We had a wet fall and a mild winter with good snow cover, so very little winter injury has been seen. The dry weather during early pollination increased the potential crop in most areas except for the Downeast coast which had extended rain during bloom. Despite continued concerns on the bee decline, honeybees were available at a higher price. We had 66,000 bee hives brought into the state for pollination, and the weather was conducive for good pollination except at the end when it turned wet and cold. We have had light insect pressure but there were plenty of infection times for mummy berry disease and those who did not protect their plants had significant injury from this disease. For precipitation at Blueberry Hill Farm, in April we had 6.6 inches, in May we had 4.75 inches and in June we had a near record rainfall of 8.65 inches. The first two weeks of July we had 3.04 inches, which exceeds the 1 inch per week needed. The extended cool temperatures and lack of sun have delayed fruit development. When we get some sun and if we continue to get adequate moisture, I expect a better than average crop of 90 plus million pounds.

**Nova Scotia** – Weather has been overcast and misty, the bloom was good and pollination was fair. The pest pressures with *Septori*, rust, *Monilinia* and *Valdensinia* and also spanworm in some areas were significant. Also, there was a little more winter injury than previously thought that also lowered yield potential. Therefore, the best guess is that if all goes well (it is still early and a lot can happen), Nova Scotia should be in the 30 to 40 million pound window this year.

**Quebec** – Quebec expects to have a good crop - perhaps up to 75 millions pounds. The spring was cooler than normal but during pollination they had sun and warm weather, so they had good pollination. Recent weather has been cool with some precipitation.

**New Brunswick** – Little to no winter injury was observed in many fields, thanks to the adequate snow cover in the blueberry growing regions. Early spring rain provided ideal conditions for the development of *Monilinia* blight and fields that were not protected had high levels of blight. It was also difficult for growers to apply a control product because of a long infection period and fields being too wet for equipment. Weather during pollination was variable, depending on region. Early and late flowering fields had decent weather, but a 10-12 day stretch in the middle was cool and wet (overcast, light rain, cool). The cool conditions did not promote the development of *Botrytis* blight and little infection was observed. Despite some poor weather during bloom, fruit set looks decent. The month of June was wet in nearly all of NB, with above average rainfall in most regions. Early thoughts are that the crop will not be as high as last year's record crop of 33.6 million pounds. The crop is expected to be better than the 5-year average of 24 million pounds. If conditions are good, the harvest will be higher than what was harvested during the same cycle two years ago where 26.1 million pounds of blueberries were harvested.

**Prince Edward Island** – The crop in PEI is looking good so far. They did start out in May with lots of *Monilinia* blight conditions which were conducive to infection, and this has proven to give lots of symptoms showing up in fields in the western part of PEI where typically *Monilinia* has not been a problem. There are also spots in the east as well. Pollination weather was variable. When the weather was good it was really good, but when it was bad, it was quite bad with lots of rain and wind. However, fruit set looks very good overall. They had some outbreaks of leaf-tier and spanworm during pollination, but these seem to be OK. The weather has been cool and cloudy during late June/early July and expect yield to be some where near the 10 million pound mark once again.

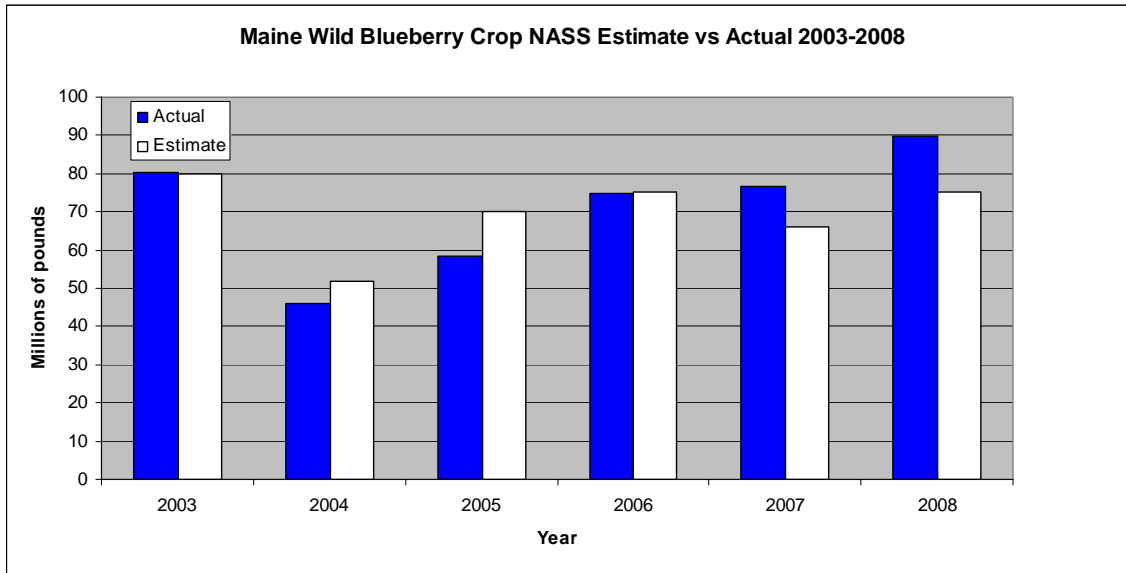
**Newfoundland** – No report available, but expect an average crop of 0.5 million pounds.

**Wild Blueberries** (total wild crop is estimated at about 240 million pounds).

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*A Member of the University of Maine System*

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## CROP SITUATIONS IN OTHER AREAS

**Cultivated Blueberries** - Total cultivated production is not yet available but about 70% will be sold fresh and 30% processed – an effort is being made to market more of the crop as fresh.

**Michigan/Indiana** - Excessive cold temperatures of -26°F caused winter kill and a wet fall. Ample snow and a wet spring has reduced the potential crop to more of an average, so crop estimate is 88 million pounds for MI and 2.5 for IN.

**New Jersey, NY, ON** - Estimate a crop of about 50 million pounds with 45 million fresh and 5 million processed.

**Pacific Northwest** (WA,OR, BC,CA) - Estimate a good crop with OR about 10% higher at 50 million pounds and BC is estimating a bumper crop of 90 million pounds with about 40% being sold as fresh.

**Southern States** (NC,GA,AR,FL,MS,AL) - A number of freezes (14 to 16) took place from January through March which reduced the FL crop by 10-20% and the highbush crop by 50%. An increase in the rabbiteye crop for fresh is expected. No berries from the southern states other than North Carolina go to be processed.

## Blueberry Crop 2004-2008

CULTIVATED Highbush						
REGION	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	5-YR AVG
<b>Midwest</b>						
Michigan, IL, IN, other	81.5	77.3	86.4	94.6	113.8	90.72
<b>Northeast</b>						
New Jersey	34	46	52	54	59	49
NY	3.5	1.0	2.2	2.5	2.5	2.34
<b>West</b>						
British Columbia	63	65	63	70	70	66.2
OR, WA, CA	57	51	64.6	91.9	89.1	70.72
<b>South</b>						
North Carolina	22.9	26	25.5	14.5	28.5	23.48
AR, FL, GA, AL, MS	34.1	32.7	45.4	26.7	56	38.98
<b>Total Cultivated</b>	<b>296</b>	<b>299</b>	<b>339.1</b>	<b>354.2</b>	<b>418.9</b>	<b>341.44</b>
WILD LOWBUSH						
REGION	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	5-YR AVG
<b>Maine</b>						
Maine	46	58.4	74.6	76.5	89.95	69.09
<b>Quebec</b>						
Quebec	45	44.4	69.2	44	72	54.92
<b>Maritime Provinces</b>						
Nova Scotia	41.2	31.5	30.6	26.4	40	33.94
New Brunswick	18.5	19.7	20.4	26.1	33.6	23.66
Newfoundland	1	1.5	1	0.5	0.6	0.92
Prince Edward Island	8.5	8	8.4	8.3	9.8	8.6
<b>Total Wild</b>	<b>160.2</b>	<b>163.5</b>	<b>204.2</b>	<b>181.8</b>	<b>245.95</b>	<b>191.13</b>
TOTAL COMBINED PRODUCTION						
<b>Cultivated &amp; Wild</b>	<b>456.2</b>	<b>462.5</b>	<b>543.3</b>	<b>536</b>	<b>664.9</b>	<b>532.57</b>

Sincerely,

David E. Yarborough  
Extension Blueberry Specialist