

AGRICULTURE - - Blueberries

Fred Shaw, Blueberry Manager
 Old Western Peat Plant
 1921 Westminster Highway,
 Richmond, B.C.

Interviewed: February 21, 1973.

. . . born May 21, 1913, Carver, Mass., U.S.A. . . . as an infant moved to Michigan where father pioneered cranberry bog . . . returned at age of 18 to Mass. until coming to Richmond in 1954 . . . son, Paul is 4th generation cranberry grower in family, youngest son also interested. . . . no raw land in Mass. . . . talked to friends at Experimental Station . . . three men, Jim Thomas, Norman Holmes and Fred Shaw came out to see British Columbia area . . . owner of Western Peat (Carncross) had been talking to Dr. Fred Chandler of Experimental Station.

Jim Thomas came ahead in summer of 1953 . . . 1954 Norman Holmes and Fred picked up cranberry vines from Carver (3 varieties) and stopped in Northern Wisconsin and added MacFarlane vines - continued to Richmond . . . Thomas had enough land ready to set out first 12 acres . . . besides these varieties Dr. Chandler gave 14-15 unnamed varieties so had 19 varieties to start and find the best . . . in 5 years study chose No. 8, later named Bergman . . . took another 4 years to propagate to get started.

1960's (early) - Shaw was handed blueberry growing operation in that area which Mr. Carncross had started earlier (30 acres) 1946. 1965 or 1966 - company wanted more so brought thousands of blueberry plants by trailer from New Jersey . . . now 130 acres blueberries at Old Western Peat. Varieties mature different times to space out harvest.

Varieties -	Wegmonth	Rubel
	Bluecrop	Jersey
	Blue Ray	Dixi
	Berkley	Ivanhoe
	Pemberton	Collins

stretched season out from late June to October, when usual frost finished total harvest.

Land - cranberries had preference in land . . . in raw organic peat . . . blueberries grow either in organic or mineral soils . . . put into marginal land . . . on edges from peat coming to clay area . . . so blueberries plantings somewhat surround cranberry planting. . . . seedlings inspected by Department of Agriculture, both in New Jersey and B.C. . . . set in small beds here first before being put in permanent beds . . . in last 3 years started to harvest the new acreage . . . last year harvested 50 tons . . . plants, if cared for, continue indefinitely . . . Rubel blueberry was taken from wilds.

Fertilizer - Soil and leaf sample analysis made regularly at Cloverdale Agricultural station for soil analysis (sun dried) and leaf analysis (oven baked) at Blueberry Co-op sent with soil and to Summerland Agricultural Station. Complete fertilizer used, with 3 major elements, some minor elements . . . light fertilizer 4-20-15 with sulphur and other minor elements added . . . blueberry plants fertilized by hand under outer branches.

Pruning - continuously in rotation 3 - 5 years . . . rid of old wood for best production . . . will be mechanical operation soon.

Weeding - women weed woody plants such as hard hack, blackberry, Hudson Bay tea every 3 - 5 years . . . can't use herbicides.

Insects - many in blueberries, in soil and in upper plant . . . spray every 5 - 6 years , . . . ground insects there for years, do much damage, can't eliminate them . . . systemic insecticides now being tested for release . . . mice gnaw blueberry bark . . . encourage cats in field, hawks, owls, red fox (later killed on highway) keep mice down.

Damage by birds: Starling, is larger bird, flocks . . . first experience 6 years ago with 50 tons to pick. Starlings descended as berries ripened . . . used Japanese netting with superstructure of 2 x 2 cedar poles with spring wires between, put up and taken down twice a year . . . moved around to each variety as it came along . . . then used carbide gun - makes a loud bang . . . changed gun to be fed from propane tank with clock timer attached . . . price rose to \$150 apiece . . . last year electronic device available which runs off 12 volt battery . . . said to speak starling language but meaningless . . . play continuously and expected to send starlings away . . . effective with robins who dislike it . . . 2 sizes alarm systems: 2 large ones, rotate on poles, 10 single with one loudspeaker . . . move alarms around as varieties ripen . . . birds also do good to blueberries by eating insects so like to have them certain times . . . one day after finish blueberries fields are opened, alarms taken out, birds come by thousands to clean fruit dropped on ground, and insects.

. . . birds jumpy . . . also use shotguns . . . used 20 cases of shotgun shells to keep birds out last year. Pheasants in blueberries - flock of 5 cocks, 14 hens scratch ground and eat grubs . . . also use bantam chickens same way, live in 'wild'. Ralph St. John, blueberry grower on Westminster Highway, also has bantams.

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Blossom - Depending on variety blueberry comes in May for 6-week period . . . harvest in June, some years mid-July, continues to October, frost ends it . . . 50% by hand and 50% by machine . . . some varieties picked 4 - 5 times on a bush . . . final picking with machines, dumped in box, wheeled out, taken to cleaning shed, then nightly to B.C. Blueberry Co-op.

. . . employ 100 - 250 hand pickers at times . . . when kids go to school pickers drop off so finish up with machines.

Shipped to: United States - Los Angeles; air shipped to San Francisco, Houston, Australia.

Dellis Cleland