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Fruit Crop Report

Seasonal Reports | Weekly Weather Maps | Fruit Crops Production | Vegetable Crops Report

Weekly Provincial Overview

Mid-late season apple cultivar harvest continues, with average to above average yields. Strawberry growers continue to monitor soil moisture levels, and irrigate as needed, to assist plants to gather energy reserves to enter the dormancy phase later this fall and to survive the winter. Periodic rain events in most regions have reduced irrigation demand (see Weekly Weather Maps link above).

Commercial Fruit Crops - Timely Topics

Strawberries - Nitrogen Fertilizer Application Timing

Nitrogen application timing has a direct bearing on plant development, yield and fruit quality.

New Fields

Nitrogen should be applied and incorporated, prior to planting, at a rate based on soil test results. Once new plants have established their own root system, apply 15 to 20 lb/acre. Make another small application at the early stages of runnering (see Table 1). Then again, based on soil tests, in late fall once plants are dormant.

Established Fields

In most cases, nitrogen applications should be limited to the spring of the fruiting year. Excessive nitrogen, in fruit bearing plants, favours development of large and numerous leaves, that may hide flowers and interfere with pollination. Also, larger leaves tend to maintain wet conditions near the ground, promoting fruit rot. Excessive nitrogen applications can also lead to plants that are more susceptible to disease and insect pests.

Consider applying a split application, of the recommended rate (from a soil test report), half in the fall/ spring and half at renovation, especially if higher rates of nitrogen are recommended. Several applications of nitrogen are more effective than a large, single application.

After a planting is established, nitrogen can be broadcast over the entire field, or banded over the rows. Banding is a more cost-effective application method, because the same amount of fertilizer can be used to cover twice as much field area. Nitrogen can also be applied through the irrigation system.

Nitrogen applications at renovation promote flower bud formation for the next year's crop. However, nitrogen application in late summer-fall may delay normal dormancy and cause increased risk of winter injury.

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Nitrogen fertilizer can be applied in late fall **OR** early spring. Late fall applications are preferred, as field work is generally more favourable, with less straw on the field at that time. In early spring, fields can also be too wet for field equipment. If there is winter injury in an established strawberry field, an early season nitrogen application of 30 lb/acre may improve plant vigour (see Table 1).

Table 1: Recommended Timing of Nitrogen Applications in Strawberry Fields

New Fields	Established Fields
Before transplanting (based on soil test)	Late Fall (based on soil test)
4-6 weeks after transplanting (low rate)	Renovation (based on soil test)
At runnering (low rate)	Early Spring (if not applied late fall)
Late Fall (based on soil test)	Spring if winter injury present @30 lbs N/ac

Spotlight on Wild Fruit of Manitoba: Highbush Cranberry

Figure 1: Ripening wild Highbush cranberries.

Highbush cranberry (*Viburnam trilobum* Marsh.) is sometimes confused with the true cranberry (*Vaccinium macrocarpon*). It is a deciduous shrub belonging to the *Caprifoliaceae* family and has an open spreading habit and heights ranging from 6.5 to 13 ft (2 to 4 m). Highbush cranberries are native to Canada with a range from New Brunswick to British Columbia and North to Alaska, making it very winter hardy. Highbush cranberry has not had a lot of attention from breeders, but there are some cultivars available with improved fruit characteristics.

Highbush cranberry flowers in early summer and produces bright glowing red ripe fruit by late summer (Figure 1). Fresh fruit are rather unpalatable so most uses involve cooked fruit recipes. Often the fruit is picked after a frost which tends to make it softer and more palatable.

Highbush cranberries are well known for the sparkling jelly produced from the fruit. The fruit is also used to make wines, liqueurs, and sauces with a flavour comparable to true cranberry. Fruit of the Highbush cranberry is said to smell like "dirty feet," which disappears during the cooking process. The addition of lemon or orange peelings during cooking will help to eliminate the natural odour.

Province of Manitoba | agriculture - Highbush Cranberry Production in Manitoba

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