

# Proceedings of the North American Blueberry Research and Extension Workers Meeting, 2018 Orono, Maine

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# Proceedings of the North American Blueberry Research and Extension Workers Meeting

Edited by David Yarborough, Seanna Annis  
Frank Drummond, the University of Maine

August 12-15, 2018



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## **2018 Conference Report**

**2018 Orono, Maine**

The North American Blueberry Research and Extension Workers Conference is an ad hoc group of University and industry personnel that meet in a different location every four years to discuss progress in blueberry culture. The meeting began in 1960 in New Jersey at Rutgers University.

The 2018, the North American Blueberry Research and Extension Workers Conference took place August 12-15 at the Wells Conference Center at the University of Maine in Orono. The meeting was conducted by the University of Maine Cooperative Extension, and a welcome was provided by the president of the University of Maine and UMM, Dr. Joan Ferrini-Mundy.

This is the second time that this national conference has been held in Maine; the first was in 1966. This year more than 74 participants from 13 states and four other countries, Norway, Canada, Mexico and New Zealand attended the conference.

During the four-day conference there were 34 presentations on topics ranging from the history and geology with the outlook of climate change on blueberries in Maine, to studies of management and pest control in both lowbush and highbush blueberries, to the effect of increased foreign and domestic blueberry production on U.S. blueberry industries. A wine and cheese session was also held to view 25 research poster presentations. There was a lobster bake at the University ornamental gardens at the conclusion of the talks.

The last day of the conference featured a tour of the blueberry barrens to see mechanical harvesting; a visit to Blueberry Hill research farm, which included a bee hive tour; a visit to a small organic farm; and a tour of Wyman's of Maine's wild blueberry processing facility.

The business meeting ended with representatives of British Columbia tentatively accepting to host the 2022 meeting, contingent on approval of the BC Blueberry Council, and we have since received confirmation.

We wish to thank our sponsors: the US Highbush Blueberry Council, Bayer and Valent for their financial support; and the Wild Blueberry Commission of Maine for both their financial support and help in facilitating payments, as this meeting would not have been possible without it.

The proceedings are on-line at the University of Maine Digital Commons. They were peer reviewed by blueberry worker colleagues. David Yarborough, Seanna Annis and Frank Drummond served as editors. Papers were encouraged but not required.

## **NABREW meetings (organizers):**

- 1960 New Brunswick, NJ (Rutgers University)
- 1966 Orono, ME (University of Maine)
- 1974 East Lansing, MI (Michigan State University)
- 1979 Fayetteville, AR (University of Arkansas)
- 1984 Gainesville, FL (University of Florida)
- 1990 Portland, OR (Washington State University)
- 1994 Beltsville, MD (USDA)
- 1998 Wilmington, NC (North Carolina State University)
- 2002 Halifax, NS (Nova Scotia Agricultural College)
- 2006 Tifton, GA (University of Georgia)
- 2010 Kalamazoo, MI (Michigan State University)
- 2014 Atlantic City, NJ (Rutgers University)
- 2018 Orono, ME (University of Maine Cooperative Extension)
- 2022 Vancouver, British Columbia (BC Blueberry Council)



**Best Conference ever.....**

## **NABREW Introduction and Remarks**

*Dr. Joan Ferrini-Mundy, President of the University of Maine.*

The University of Maine has had a long standing relationship with the wild blueberry industry since 1898. In the 1940's, after several poor crops, growers approached the University asking for help to improve the crop. A grower tax was established in 1945 to conduct research and Extension activities to improve the blueberry industry. Land was also purchased and the Blueberry Hill Farm Maine Agricultural Experiment Station was established in Jonesboro. This facility was updated with a new lab in 2004. We have developed an active and sophisticated Integrated Crop Management program that reduces inputs and improves economic returns for our growers.

Research and outreach activities have allowed wild blueberries to increase from 10 million to 100 million pounds while the number of acres decreased from over 100,000 acres to about 44,000 acres today. The University of Maine will continue to work closely with The Wild Blueberry Commission of Maine to ensure the viability of the wild blueberry industry.

The North American Blueberry Research and Extension Workers meeting is the primary North American venue for sharing the latest information on blueberry culture. Held every four years, it provides an opportunity for networking with researchers and Extension educators from across the United States, Canada and from around the world. Although there are now numerous other venues that compete, including the Horticultural Congress, International Vaccinium Conference and the newly formed International Blueberry Organization, your participation in this meeting indicates it still has relevance since it was established in 1960.

It also provides an opportunity for participants to have an opportunity to visit the diverse blueberry cropping systems of Northern and Southern highbush, Rabbiteye blueberry, the new Northern Rabbiteye and of course the wild lowbush blueberry in Maine and Canada.

Established in 1960 to recognize 50 years of progress in blueberry culture, the first meeting at Rutgers University had 95 in attendance, with George Darrow providing the history talk, and covered the traditional topics of culture, marketing, pest management and breeding. That year, cultivated blueberries produced 55.2 million pounds and with wild at 39.3 million pounds, less than 100 million pounds were produced in North America.

The second meeting was held at the University of Maine in 1966 and participation rose to 126 with similar topics but with the addition of pollination, physiology and processing. The prediction was made then "that in the near future the lowbush blueberry will be grown in an organized cultural program" (using named varieties growing in row culture), well, we are still waiting for that to occur.

In 2014 the meeting returned to New Jersey to celebrate 'Where it all began' to recognize 100 years of blueberry culture. There were 59 in attendance and included new sessions on postharvest handling and genomics. That year there were 745 million pounds of cultivated and 331 million pounds of wild, so North American production exceeded one billion pounds.

Maine now hosts this meeting for the second time with 75 in attendance and many more diverse topics added to the program.

As blueberries are now grown throughout the world, it is important to continue our discussions to improve its culture to allow us to continue to be competitive; this conference ensures we have good communication among all blueberry types and that we will all continue to be successful in future years.