

Taming the Wild Blueberry

Wallace S. Moreland

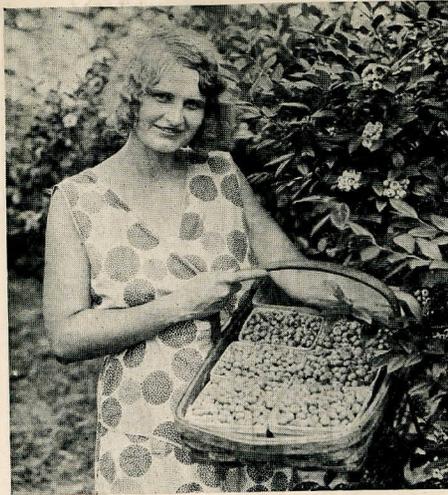
Behind the report that the world's largest crop of cultivated blueberries was harvested in central Jersey this summer is the story of a thriving farm industry that owes its start to research of a U. S. Department of Agriculture scientist in Washington. He is Dr. Frederick V. Coville, plant breeder and botanist, and a man who was unimpressed when horticulturists said the commercial cultivation of blueberries "couldn't be done."

Early Growers Failed

That was more than 30 years ago, when those who had tried to cultivate blueberries commercially had nothing to report but failure. Many a grower had optimistically set out a field of blueberry plants only to have his hopes fade as the plants failed to thrive and finally died. But now the plants live and this year's Jersey crop, which was 99 per cent of the world's cultivated production, was more than 10,000 crates of 32 quarts each.

Just why the plants would not make good growth under cultivation remained unknown until Dr. Coville, conducting experiments with blueberry plants in a U. S. Department of Agriculture greenhouse at Washington, proved that an acid peat soil was the only medium in which these plants would make a healthy growth. This information provided the initial impetus for the commercial cultivation of blueberries.

After Doctor Coville's work was published in bulletin form and came to the attention of the public generally, Miss Elizabeth C. White offered to cooperate with the U. S. Department of Agriculture in future blueberry work. The offer was particularly valuable because Miss White was associated with Joseph J. White, Inc., one of the



A Fair Blueberry Picker on One of New Jersey's Plantations



A Sprig of Domesticated Blueberries, One Half Natural Size

country's leading cranberry growers and owner of a considerable amount of land suitable for production of blueberries. She was able and willing to select desirable wild plants at considerable expense and offer them to the department of agriculture for the cross-breeding work that Doctor Coville was planning to start. She also offered to test the seedling plants, the result of the cross-breeding. Miss White's enthusiasm for this work has had much to do with the rapid promotion of blueberry culture in New Jersey.

50,000 Crossed Plants in New Jersey

Since 1910 Doctor Coville has been making crosses of desirable plants, and more than 50,000 have been planted in New Jersey. From this work such varieties as Pioneer, Cabot, Rancocas, Concord, and

Jersey have resulted. The Rubel variety that is very popular today is one of Miss White's selected wild plants.

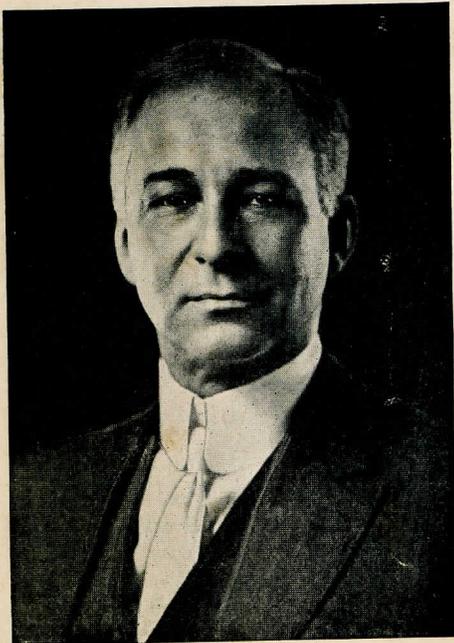
The New Jersey Agricultural Experiment station also has contributed to the development of the blueberry growing industry through its fertilizer tests, pruning experiments, and insect control work. The institution now maintains a sub-station at Pemberton, where research in both blueberry growing and cranberry growing is carried on under the direction of Charles S. Beckwith. The fertilizer tests of the station, made on blueberry plantings in and near Pemberton, showed the need for commercial fertilizers and the kinds to use. It was demonstrated that proper use of fertilizers would more than double yields and greatly increase the size of the berries.

Shows Value of Pruning

Through the station's pruning experiments it was shown that pruning must be done if plantings are to continue to bear profitably. Growers now renew, through pruning, almost all of the tops of their plants, and they believe plants so pruned will continue to bear well for many years.

Insect control work of the station has dealt mainly with the development of controls for such pests as root worms, stem borers, and leaf rollers, none of which cause serious damage but any of which may become exceedingly destructive if not continually watched.

The blueberry industry is expanding rapidly in New Jersey as the growers, most of whom also grow cranberries, are provided through research with additional information on how to obtain higher yields of improved berries. This year's crop of more than 10,000 crates is nearly twice as large

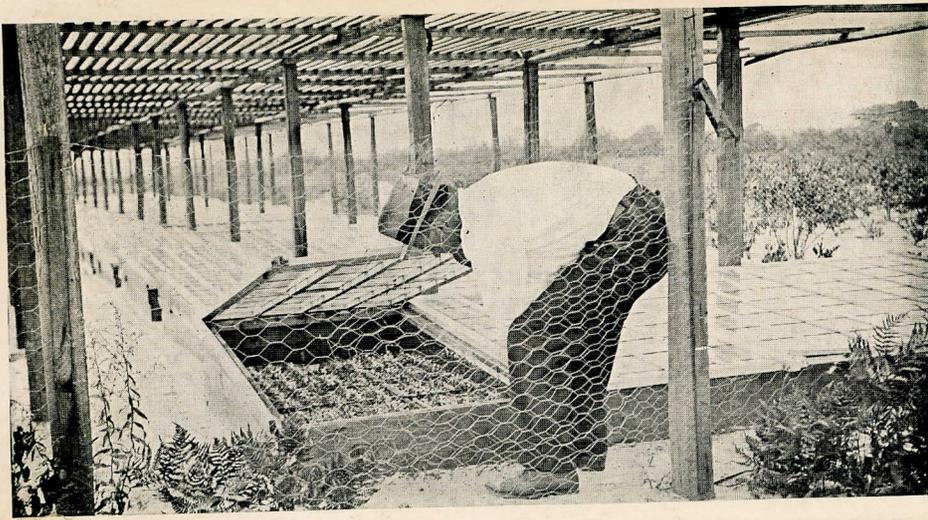


Dr. Frederick V. Coville, Pioneer Who Tamed the Wild Blueberry when Others Said It Could Not Be Done



Charles S. Beckwith, New Jersey Experiment Station Expert on Blueberry and Cranberry Culture and Investigations

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Deacidified
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C. S. Beckwith Ventilating Young Sash-Grown Blueberry Plants. Note the Overhead Slatted Sunbreak

as last season's yield of 5,380 crates. And last season's crop was 40 per cent larger than the one of 1929.

The trend of prices, which had been upward since the first berries were marketed commercially in 1918, fell off this year. Many sales were made at 40 cents a quart wholesale when the harvest was well under way in July, although earlier in the season some offerings brought twice that amount. Last year, however, some berries sold for as much as \$1 a quart wholesale, and that figure represented the peak of a steadily rising price curve that began at 35 cents in 1918.

It is estimated by Mr. Beckwith that growers this year received only about 25 per cent more for a crop twice as large as last season's.

He emphasizes that blueberry growing should not be regarded by the inexperienced as a bonanza. He bases his belief on the fact that blueberry growing requires specialized knowledge and experience in the work and a heavy investment, especially for plants of desirable varieties. Emphasis also is laid on the fact that the trend is distinctly toward still further increases in blueberry production.

Look for Increased Efficiency

The lower prices this year did not take

the New Jersey growers by surprise as they expected that the economic depression would have considerable effect on blueberry consumption. The crop was not considered too large for our country in normal times. The growers are continuing to increase their



Stanley Coville (right), Manager of the Blueberry Cooperative Association, and C. S. Beckwith Examine a Promising Variety



A Culmination of Intelligent Experimentation, Hard Work, and Persistence. Plantation of Vigorous Domestic Blueberries in Central Jersey

acreage hoping therefore to reduce production costs and allow them to continue to sell blueberries at the lower prices which are bound to obtain more or less permanently at some future time.

In this connection it is of interest to record that Dr. Coville, who makes frequent visits to his experimental plots in New Jersey, has expressed the belief that "it will be very easy to overdo the blueberry industry." His advice to growers has been, "Don't get caught in a position similar to that of the wheat growers."

Flemington Attracts 128 Animals

(Continued from page 9)

very exceptional animals. In each of the three classes the awards were closely contested. Observer's Golden Bard, shown by Kenneth Hamilton, Lambertville, won the blue ribbon for aged bulls and was also made grand champion.

In the female Jersey classes George Savidge, Pennington, repeated his winnings of the previous season with his cow Sweep's Princess, taking first in her class and also senior and grand championship. In getting the latter rosette she had close competition with the junior champion, Volunteer's Wexford Rose, owned by Martha E. Rogers, Crosswicks. The 31 Jerseys also were judged by Mr. Thompson.

Ayrshires

Only three representatives of this breed were shown. They were shown in separate classes, the junior award going to Colebrook Barberrry, a stylish young animal owned by Foster Noble, Lafayette.

Showmanship and Fitting Awards

Prof. E. J. Perry had a hard task in selecting from the 128 animals and their owners the recipients of the special awards for fitting and showmanship. These honors were awarded during the cattle parade on Thursday in front of the grandstand.

For best showman, silver trophy given by David Agans—George Savidge, Pennington.

For best showmanship, (boy) silver medal—Theodore Schanzlin, Washington.

For best showmanship, (girl) silver medal—Marjorie Farry, Farmingdale.

First prize, best fitted animal in Hunterdon or Mercer County, \$15—Edgar Savidge, Pennington.

Second prize, best fitted animal in Hunterdon or Mercer County, \$5—Margaret Findall, Trenton.

For best Guernsey showman (experienced), Guernsey calf awarded by Mrs. M. H. Lloyd, Bernardsville—Marjorie Farry, Farmingdale.

For best Guernsey showman (inexperienced), Guernsey calf awarded by Mrs. Lloyd—Walter Lawson, Morristown.

In the year ending June 30, 1930, 1,003 New Jersey businesses went bankrupt. Of this number 12 were farms. Illinois with 364, and Iowa with 328, led in the number of farm bankruptcies that year.