

## Wild Blueberries

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Growing wild blueberries is a different kind of agriculture. Unlike traditional crops which are planted, cultivated and harvested, blueberry growers instead 'manage' wild stands of native plants. Wild blueberries are not planted. The first step in developing a blueberry field is identifying land where wild blueberries are already established. Often the best blueberry fields are developed from old farm land which has been abandoned for thirty to fifty years. By using a mix of traditional and modern agricultural practices Island blueberry growers can often achieve yields in excess of 3,000 pounds per acre.

Although wild blueberries grow in most areas of the province, commercial production has been centred around those areas that have a high natural density of wild blueberry plants. Most commercial production takes place in the Tignish, Wood Islands, Mt Stewart and Souris area.



The Island is an attractive blueberry producing area due to the fact that the fields are relatively level and rock-free which makes crop production much easier. This contrasts with the hilly and rocky blueberry barrens found in other producing areas. Moreover, the Island's blueberry yields compare very favourably to yields in other producing areas. For instance, the average five-year yield (1985 - 1989) in Maine was 1,607 pounds per acre. In 1989, the Island's yield was 1,953 pounds per acre. As management techniques improve growers have been achieving higher yields. Today it is not unusual for a field to produce 3,000 pounds per acre and 8,000 pounds per acre have been realized. The Island's yield performance and the level, rock-free fields which allows for mechanization represents a competitive advantage for Island producers.

The majority of the Prince Edward Island crop is shipped to processors, while approximately one percent of the crop is sold locally as fresh product. Prince Edward Island wild blueberries are sold in Asia, Europe and North America and are used in a wide variety of products including breakfast cereals, wines, jams, yogurts and muffins.

Although the acreage of blueberries is still small compared to other crops grown in the province, the blueberry industry in Prince Edward Island is expanding rapidly. In 1996, 1,300 acres were harvested as compared to only 660 acres harvested in 1995. It is estimated that 1,700 acres will be harvested this year, an increase of about thirty percent. In addition, there are about 6,000 acres under development that will come into production over the next five years.

**For further information contact the [Client Information Officer](#) of the [Prince Edward Island Department of Agriculture and Forestry](#).**

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