

Project: The effect of pruning on haskap berry production and disease incidence

Overview:

Borealis variety haskap plants were pruned in April 2016. Three treatments are being evaluated – Treatment 1: No pruning, Treatment 2: 25% removal, and Treatment 3: 50% removal. Yields were taken in July 2016, and incidence of disease was noted in each treatment. Yields will be collected and compared again in 2017.

Why this is important:

Haskap production is a very new industry in Nova Scotia and there has been very little production research in Eastern Canada on this crop. Growers have noticed an increase in botrytis fruit rot in some varieties of haskap (particularly borealis) because the bush can become quite dense which impedes air flow through the plant. Other bush berry crops (highbush blueberry, currants etc.) benefit greatly from regular pruning to remove old wood, which stimulates new growth and opens the plant for more airflow and subsequently less disease. Haskap are also very time consuming to hand pick and there is evidence from other crops that while pruning may not increase the overall yield, it increases the size profile of the berry making it far more efficient to harvest (ie. fewer number of larger berries = shorter picking times per bush). Preliminary results from 2016 harvest indicate that this may be true for haskap, as well. Anecdotally, less botrytis was noticed in plots that were pruned versus the unpruned treatments. Pruning did stimulate significant new growth as it was not visibly evident which plots were the pruning treatments by the time plants were harvested in July because of the new growth.

Project length:

Two years. It was initiated in spring 2016 with an early spring pruning while plants were still dormant and harvest in early July. Plants will be monitored for disease incidence and growth in 2016 and yields will be measured again in July 2017.

Project co-operators and funders:

This is a Perennia project funded through the Industry Development Fund under Growing Forward 2, the five-year framework agreement for agriculture which is cost-shared 60-40 between the federal and provincial governments.