



It looked like a never ending job for Ellis MacDonald as he made his way back and forth across the cranberry bogs, filling sacks with cranberries and clipping vines. The vines grew exceptionally long this year and they had to be pruned before the bog was flooded and the remaining berries harvested. (Harrington Photo)



Dana Jennings (left) and Elizabeth MacDonald dump a bag of cranberries into a bin for sorting. The large vines are removed before the berries are sent off back to Baywater Farm for cleaning. (Harrington Photo)



Lloyd Jennings (left) has been farming for many years but even at 85 years of age he doesn't look ready for retirement. Jim Fraser (right) and Lloyd were helping clean vines from cranberries, freshly harvested from the bog in Masstown. (Harrington Photo)

My Favourite Pet



Ashleigh Sharpe, Station Road, Londonderry likes Basset Hounds, especially five month old Moses, a lemon and white with blue/green eyes. Ashleigh and Moses will receive a \$20.00 gift certificate from Clarence's Farm Services and The Shoreline Journal.



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Cranberry Harvest In Full Swing

By Linda Harrington

Thanksgiving dinner would not be complete without a side dish of cranberries, and the same can be said about Christmas dinner. Lucky for us, fall cranberry harvest is underway at local farms.

Baywater Farm's cranberry bog is located a lengthy trek across the vast Masstown Marsh. Lloyd, David and Annette Jennings started the project back in 1999, which included a great deal of site preparation. Ditches and dykes surround the bogs, irrigation pipes were put into place and 2-3 inches of sand was added as a base for planting the first vines in 2000. They harvested their first crop in 2002.

Cranberry farming requires a year round commitment. Beginning in March, when the ground is still frozen, attention must be given to ice frozen over the delicate vines located in the bogs. "We must remove the standing water from under the ice and then when it has melted we check to make sure the oxygen levels are still good in the water," says Annette Jennings. "In April we

start getting lines flushed and sprinkler heads on. Fertilizing, weed control and pest control is done throughout the summer months and we must protect from frost damage in both the spring (blossoms) and fall (berries)."

Equipment for cranberry farming is not always readily available. "Dave is our builder," says Annette. "If we need something like a fertilizer spreader and we can't buy exactly what we want, then Dave makes it. He recently built a new reeler out of a skid steer. The reeler helps beat the cranberries off the vines when the bog is flooded, so they will float to the surface."

There are two methods used to harvest cranberries. One is called a dry harvest, and berries picked by this method are generally sold for a higher price. These berries are the ones you see as fresh cranberries in bins and bags at the retail stores.

The dry method of harvest involves walking behind a machine, which has a raking system, and picking the berries into sacks. Care is

taken to minimize the traffic over the cranberries.

Vine growth was exceptionally high this year. The vines had to be pruned at the same time as the berries were being picked. This pruning meant much more work to get the fresh cranberries to market.

The bags of vines and berries were sorted by hand, which was very labor intensive. Harvest was also slowed as there was only one of these special harvest/pruning machines available. Weather was very uncooperative this year, too. The cranberries need to be dry and the rainy weather has been impeding the harvest.

Final cleaning of the cranberries is completed back at Baywater Farms and then the product is ready for shipping. Annette says most of their fresh berries are sold locally at the Masstown Market.

The second method of harvest involves flooding the bogs, passing the reeler through the vines and having the cranberries float to the sur-



face. Wind will usually blow the berries to one end, where they can be suctioned off, or a long boom can be used to pull the berries along, if there is no wind. Cranberries harvested by the wet method will go for processing into juices, jellies and many other delicious food products.

Other cranberry farmers in the area include Peter Swinkels and Paul Kitilsen. Producers have not had any difficulty selling their product but like other agricultural products the prices can fluctuate. When prices for dry and wet harvest are similar, some farmers find it more economical to forego the labor intensive dry harvest and use only wet harvest for their crops.

For more information on the NS Cranberry Growers Association, including recipes, visit their website at nscanberry.ca.

Public Notice

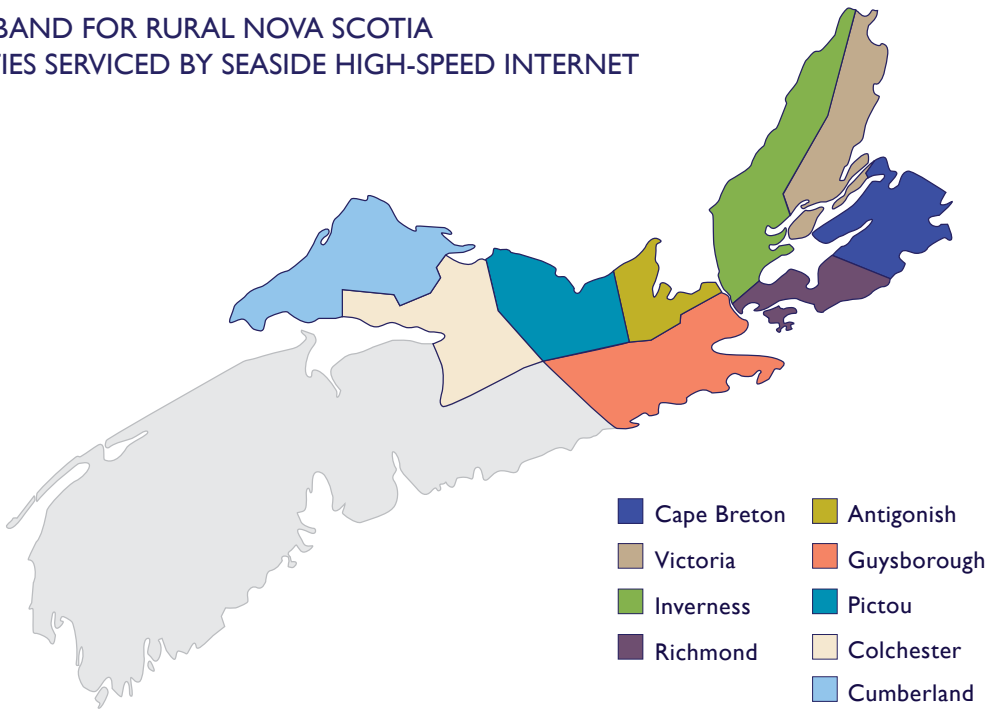
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