

Add a Daily Dose of Blue

By Linda Harrington

Past research has suggested the high antioxidant capacity of wild blueberries helps to fight oxidative stress in the body, but as continued research grows in complexity, there appears to be many more reasons one should be loading up on a daily dose of wild blue!

Dr. Wilhelmina Kalt, a research scientist at Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) in Kentville presented at the recent WBPANS meeting a promising report on current research relating to wild blueberries and health. Berry research in general has "gone wild" with hundreds of scientific papers written on the health benefits of blueberries.

Anthocyanin pigments are flavonoids, compounds already well-known for their health benefits. And like other flavonoids,

anthocyanin pigments have been found to have various positive effects on human health. The deep blue color of wild blueberries makes it easy to see these delicious berries boast a high level of beneficial anthocyanin pigments.

For example, in neuroscience research, studies showed that when blueberries were added to the diet,

the brain was better protected from declines in cognitive and motor performance during aging and stress.

Increased levels of anthocyanins have been shown to lower the risk of heart attack in women, lower the risk of high blood pressure, reduce

chronic inflammation and improve insulin sensitivity.

Once consumed, anthocyanins are extensively metabolized and then well-retained by the body, which may contribute to the benefits seen in human populations who regularly consume berries.

Dr. Kalt suggests a daily dose of the juicy wild blueberry, even 2 to 3 tablespoons per day every day is certainly a good start. "More

is not necessarily better but regularity is important," says Dr. Kalt.

Three big conferences in 2017 will focus on exciting new research on berries and human health. Some of the world's most renowned berry researchers will gather in Pismo Beach, California at the Berry Health Benefits Symposium in March; the International Conference on Polyphenols and Health will take place

In Quebec next October and the 20th Bar Harbour Wild Blueberry Summit will take place in September.

Dr. Wilhelmina Kalt was awarded the "Order of the Wild Blueberry" at the Wild Blueberry Association of North America (WBANA) Symposium held in Fredericton, NB last month for her ongoing research on wild blueberries and health.



Peter Van Dyk, Van Dyk Blueberry Enterprises, gave producers some insight into value added product development.



Round table discussions at "Unlocking the Value of the NS Wild Blueberry Industry" workshop provided some innovative ideas for the Wild Blueberry industry moving forward.



Alice Pugsley- Promotion Committee Chair presents Jeff Off with the Third Prize in the Wild Blueberry Harvest Festival Raffle. Linda Dow was the second place winner.



WBPANS Past President Jeff Orr makes a presentation to Dr. David Yarborough, University of Maine following his induction into the WBPANS' Recognition Book for 2016.



Barron Blois- WBPANS President encouraged producers to work together, along with those in our neighbouring provinces and to have ongoing dialogue with local government representatives.



Chirs van den Heuval, President NSFA gave an informative report from the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture. The Environmental Farm Plan has had 1881 participants to date, with 65 new plans and 77 follow-ups this year.



A panel discussion of Wild Blueberry Farm & Industry Management in a Low-Price Environment included the following speakers (left to right): Peter Burgess- Extension Wild Blueberry Specialist, Perennia; Peter Van Dyk- Van Dyk Blueberry Enterprises; Jason Stewart- Farm Manager Southern NB, Bragg Lumber Co and Homer Woodward- Vice President, Jasper Wyman & Son.



WBPANS Past President Jeff Orr makes a presentation to Dr. Paul Hildebrand, retired Research Scientist with Agriculture & Agri-Food Canada, following his induction into the WBPANS' Recognition Book for 2016.



Dr. Wilhelmina Kalt, AAFC, Kentville gave an informative presentation on Wild Blueberries and Health Research. Many studies show there are significant health benefits related to eating wild blueberries daily.



Peter Burgess, Perennia made several informative presentations during the AGM.



Dr. Eric Albert, Perennia gave a very informative presentation on the Infrastructure & Services Perspective, including a virtual tour of the Perennia Innovation Centre.



Laurie Kittilsen, Director of Programs at NSDA discussed some government funding opportunities available.

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