

Optimistic Outlook for Wild Blueberry Producers



The 2012 WBPANS Executive. Front Row (l to r): Peter van Dyk- President, John Quin- Past President, Neil Erb- Past President, John Cameron- WBPANA Rep; Back Row (l to r): Jeff Orr- Vice Pres., Dave Sangster- Exec. Director, Janet Geldart- Administrative Assistant, Alice Pugsley- Promotion Committee Chair, Allen Bonnyman- Director, Ken MacPhee- Director, Doug Wyllie- Research Committee Chair, Barb Hagell- Director and Joe Slack- Finance Committee Chair. Missing from photo are David Atkinson, Barron Bloise and Stefan Smith.

By Linda Harrington

John Quinn, President of the Wild Blueberry Producers Association of Nova Scotia (WBPANS), gave encouraging words as he welcomed everyone to the 2011 Annual Meeting. "I hope everyone will leave here with at least one different idea to become better growers. Our goal is to make Nova Scotia the most

productive and cost effective growers in the world."

The WBPANS held their annual meeting Nov. 18th and 19th at the Best Western Glengarry, Truro. Over the two days, guest speakers covered a variety of topics including market reports, government programs, production management solutions and committee reports.

The Promotion Committee members were busy throughout

the past year, taking in events such as Saltscapes Expo at the end of April and sponsoring international visits from potential buyers. The committee has put together a Wild Blueberry Fund Raiser Program for schools, sports teams, etc. "Schools have reported \$2000 profit from this event," says Alice Pugsley, Committee Chair.

2011 marked the 15th Anniversary of the Wild Blueberry as the Provincial Berry, and this was celebrated at the Halifax Seaport Market in February. The 7th Annual NS Wild Blueberry Harvest Festival was held in August with over 700 people attending the Grand Opening Celebrations held at The Marigold Center on August 19th. Alice Pugsley reported on the great success of this annual festival reflected in over 50 events held in 36 communities.

Dr. David Yarborough, University of Maine, presented an overview of 2010 High Bush Blueberry production along with the 2011 Maine Wild Blueberry Production. He said there is reason for optimism among wild blueberry producers even though there was an overall increase in the world production of high bush berries (one of the wild blueberry's competitors). He offered this advice, "Market buyers want a consistent supply and price. Wild blueberry producers need to look at getting some sort of stability in the wild blueberry crop. This is critical looking into the future."

The 2010 combined high bush and wild blueberry production was just shy of a billion pounds, with North America by far the biggest market. Dr. Yarborough felt there was room for growth in both the fresh and processed markets, with a need for more wild blueberries in order to supply new products and new markets. "Growers competing on a world market must grow more," he says. "If we don't grow it, they will grow it."

Wild blueberry producers received a higher price for their

continued on page 17



Dave Sangster congratulates Case van Dyk and family on Case's award in recognition of his valuable contribution to the Wild Blueberry Industry. Pictured are (left to right): Jeannie van Dyk, Reik van Dyk, Case van Dyk, Dave Sangster, Peter van Dyk and Connie McLellan.



Dave Sangster (left), Executive Director of WBPANS, and President John Quinn presented Kevin Sibley (center) with an award for his father, Jack Sibley, in recognition of Jack's valuable contributions to the Wild Blueberry Industry.



Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Dr. Paul LaFleche, on behalf of Agriculture Minister John MacDonell, presented WBPANS President John Quinn (right) with a framed copy of a Resolution presented on May 9, 2011 in the Nova Scotia House of Assembly asking members of the House to recognize the 15th Anniversary of the Wild Blueberry as Nova Scotia's Official Berry.

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