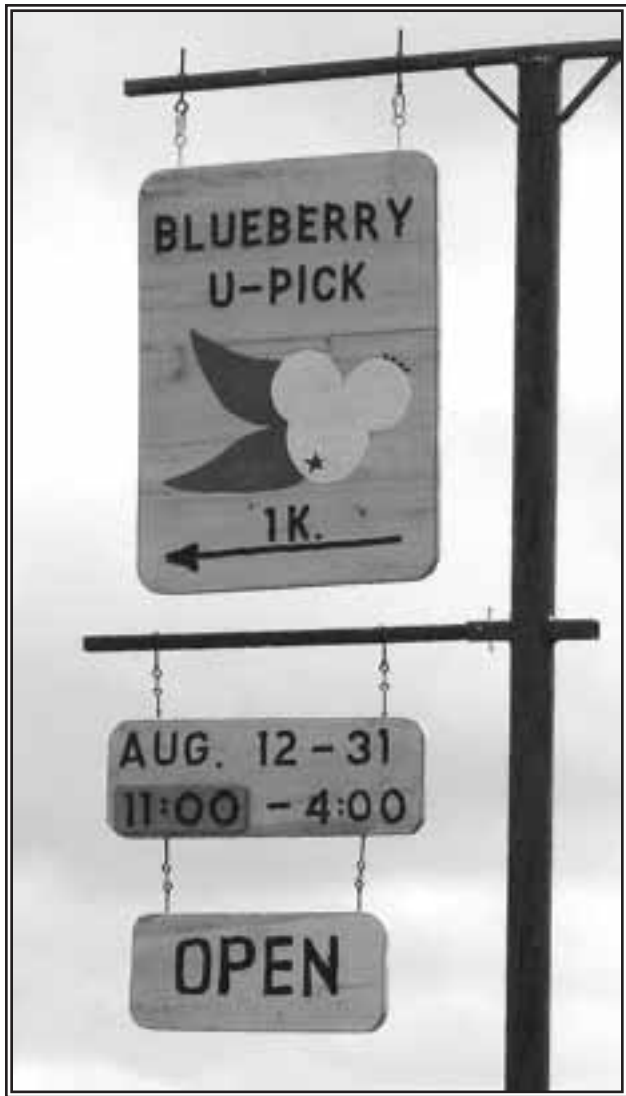


Wild Blueberry U-Pick

An Alternative Service



By Linda Harrington

Farmers have always found ways to be innovative in tough times and blueberry farmers are no exception. A sharp drop in prices had some producers looking at making cost cutting measures in production but others were looking at alternative ways to market their product.

Tony and Sandra Phillips, of Weatherby Road, Debert have been growing wild blueberries on their farm for quite a few years. Like any farmer, Tony has always looked at ways to increase his profit margin. About 6 years ago he purchased a walk behind blueberry harvester, which is a rare sight in this area. This not only helped reduce har-

vesting costs but it gave flexibility in the timing of the harvest. "We can pick the berries when they are at their peak, not simply because a commercial harvester is available," says Tony. "It also gives us the ability to supply berries to the fresh market over an extended period."

Tony and Sandra decided to add another niche to their busy farm life. This year they added a wild blueberry U-Pick, which was open daily from 11AM- 4PM throughout the season. "We always had people asking where they could go and pick berries, and with the grower price being low this year, we felt it was a good time to give it a try," says Sandra.

She says people have been quite excited about the U-pick and as many as 13 or 14 people have been in the field picking at a time. "People usually come in groups of 2 or more and they often pick 10 to 12 pounds of berries while they are here," she adds.

Three Blueberry U-pick operators are listed in the Wild Blueberry Harvest Festival promotion guide, the others are located in Earlton and Musquodoboit.

Devin Trefry, Coordinator of the Wild Blueberry Harvest Festival, was pleased to be able to add the U-Picks to the Festival schedule. "We're really excited to have wild blueberry U-picks as part of the Wild Blueberry Harvest Festival this year," he said. "Each year we receive calls for people looking for wild blueberry U-picks, and we've had to tell them that there aren't any. We hope that this new addition will be success and will fulfill that demand."

The U-pick price was \$1/pound, significantly less than what consumers would pay in the retail store for fresh berries. "It worked out to about \$1.25 to \$1.50 per quart, less than half the price in the stores," says Sandra.

The U-pick field was set up in 3 foot strips, with walkways made in between the berry strips. Tony harvested the "walkway" berries using his small walk behind harvester. Sandra was able to hand rake any remaining berries in the picking areas, thus keeping waste to a minimum.

Berries were plentiful, the field was flat and easy to navigate and there was even a portable toilet and hand wash station was on site. This made for a very pleasant wild blueberry picking experience, unlike what many had to go through in years past, as they searched forested areas for patches of the tasty fruit.

"I think there is a great deal of nostalgia associated with wild blueberry picking for a lot of people," says Derek Trefry. "And this makes it a popular family activity with a tasty reward."

Gary Crosby and his wife Velona were enjoying their sunny morning in the blueberry field, with containers piled high with what Gary says will make a very nice pie. They picked 10 to 15 pounds the week before and were back for more. "The U-pick is far superior to picking in the woods. There is a nice breeze and the field is so clean. We would definitely come back next year, and I am sure once word is out, this field will be filled with pickers," says Gary.

Sandra felt it was too soon to know for sure if they would run the U-Pick again next year. "One year is not a fair judge," she says. "It has been a 'learn as we go' process but we are creating a contact list with phone numbers and emails, so next year we will be able in touch with people. The Phillips' U-pick is now closed for this year but for those who want to be added to the contact list for next year, you can phone 662-3399 or email philbee@ns.sympatico.ca.

WILD ONES

New Children's Book

Unveiled at Wild Blueberry Festival



Publisher John Driemen joins singer/songwriter Rosalee Peppard at the unveiling of the new book *Wild Ones- The Tough Little Lowbush Blueberry*. A download of Rosalee's song *The Nova Scotia Wild Blueberry Blues* will be included in the book.

By Linda Harrington

A new book highlighting the wild blueberry will soon be hitting book shelves. "Wild Ones, The Tough Little Delicious Lowbush Blueberry", written by Paddy Muir, will be available on Sept. 10th.

The book was the brainchild of publisher John Driemen, of Northwest Arm Press, who has published several other agricultural themed books for children. "I realized there weren't any books covering this important berry and so I commissioned Patty Muir to write one," he says.

Dave Sangster, Executive Director of the NS Wild Blueberry Producers Association, is very pleased with the new book. "These books will soon be available for all elementary schools and this will complement the educational information package the NS Wild Blueberry Producers Association sends out."

"Wild Ones" gives the reader in depth information about Nova Scotia's official berry, covering production, growth, harvest, health benefits and even a few kid friendly recipes. Readers explore Wild Blueberryland, where "in July and August the magic starts to happen".

Author Patty Muir has been involved with several other projects which involved writing for children, including a seven-part video series exploring forestry and "Love From Katie", a children's book about the annual gift of a Christmas tree to Boston. In the author's notes she reports that "researching and writing Wild Ones was instructive, a lot of fun- and delicious!"

The colorful pages were brought to life by Art Director Nancy Roberts, with illustrations by Gerry Cleary and photography by Lisa Marie Noseworthy.

The Tough Little Delicious Lowbush Blueberry"

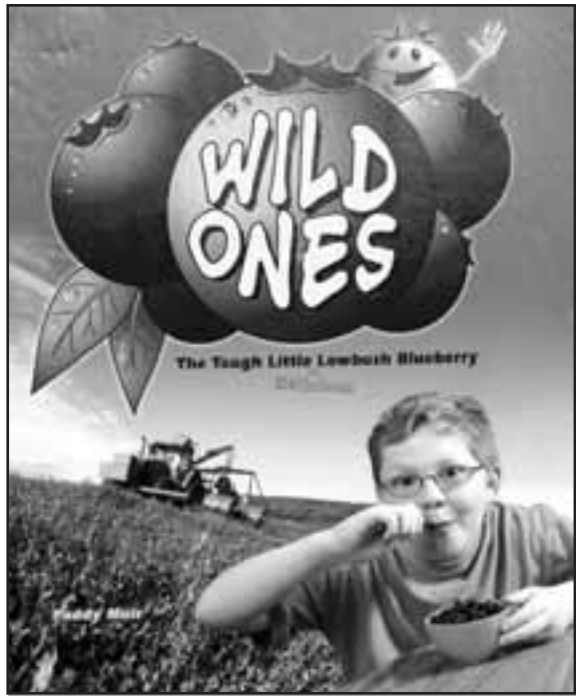
written by Paddy Muir

Local song writer and performer Rosalee Peppard has added a special feature to the delightful book.

"I had written a song called the Nova Scotia Wild Blueberry Blues, and John Driemen happened to hear me singing it at a house concert," she reflects. "He came up to me afterwards and asked if I would like to include it in a book he was publishing. I was very pleased with the idea."

Rosalee performed the song for the first time at the Wild Blueberry Festival Kick-off on August 21st in Truro. A song card will be included in each book, which allows a free mp3 download of the song.

The book is aimed at children aged 8 to 11, but other ages, including adults will find the book interesting to read. Check out page 29 for a delicious wild blueberry smoothie recipe.



Wild Ones- The Tough Little Lowbush Blueberry is a new children's book hitting bookstore on Sept. 10th. A delight to read, the book provides a wealth of information about one of the region's most important fruit crops.

Diane's Restaurant & Takeout

#1 in Steamed Clams

#1 in Fried Clams

New for 2010:

- Seniors Menu (several selections)
- Combo Plates • Southern Fried Chicken
- "Five Islands Mess"

A heaping plate of fries, smothered in hamburger, onions, gravy and cheese curds.

Fully Licensed Dining Room

Fish 'n Chips • Lobster Rolls • Homemade Seafood Chowder

Children's Menu • Hot Sandwiches

Dairy Bar • Soft & Hard Ice-Cream

Parfaits, Flurries, Sundaes & Splits

OPEN FOR BREAKFAST:

Saturday and Sunday 8 a.m. to 11 a.m.

Open Daily: April to October

874 Highway 2, Five Islands 254-3190

Homemade PIES

SATURDAY Clam Night

Handicap Accessible

Ample Parking

Outdoor Picnic Area

Children's Playground