

A production guide for growing cultivated partridgeberry (lingonberry)
(*Vaccinium vitis-idaea*) in Newfoundland and Labrador



Partridgeberry



Introduction

Partridgeberries (lingonberry), of the genus *Vaccinium*, are native to boreal forests and thrive in the cooler climates of Scandinavia, Europe, Alaska, and northwest and northeastern Canada. Partridgeberries – related to the blueberry and cranberry – are perennial, evergreen shrubs that do well in acidic soils typical of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Unlike wild, natural stands of partridgeberry that can only be managed to control competition, cultivated partridgeberries are planted and grown. Due to the difficulty of managing wild stands, commercial partridgeberry production can be supported by planting and establishing well-known European cultivars (i.e. Sussi and Sanna), which have been tested and proven viable for Newfoundland and Labrador.

Planting

Partridgeberry can be planted in spring or fall. When planting in spring, ensure the risk of frost has passed. If planting in the fall, plant early to allow time for root establishment before frost. Optimal soil conditions include well-drained, mineral soil that is rich in organic matter with a soil pH of 5.0. Plant in the center of a raised bed with root system just below the soil surface. Plants should be planted 12 inches apart within the row, with the raised beds approximately 30 inches apart. Partridgeberries need to be planted with a pollinizer cultivar in order for high yielding cultivars to be productive. It is recommended that one pollinizer cultivar (i.e. Sussi) be planted for every 10 high-yielding cultivars planted (i.e. sanna).

Mulch

Organic mulches consisting of sawdust, compost, leaf or bark mulch, wood chips, or peat moss should be incorporated into the soil prior to planting to help retain moisture and keep soil pH low. To help control weeds and retain moisture in the soil, add four inches of mulch around the base of the plants. It is recommended to add mulch every three to six years or as needed.



Fertilization

The best way to determine the plant's fertilizer requirements will be through a soil report. Nitrogen fertilizer in the ammonium form, such as urea or ammonium sulfate, is recommended. Excess amounts of fertilizer can lead to reduced yields and dieback. In years one to five, apply a small handful (five grams) of a complete fertilizer such as 5-10-10 around the base of each plant. After the fifth year, apply 10 grams of 5-10-10 per plant each year.

Irrigation

Irrigation or frequent watering is required; therefore, it is important to have a water source available. Partridgeberry can withstand several days of drought; however, the plants will begin to die back following extended periods of dry, hot weather. Moderate to severe dieback will also occur when planted in heavy soils without good water drainage.

Harvest

Partridgeberries are best picked after a frost when the berries are light red to dark red. Green partridgeberries are unripe and bitter. Partridgeberries stored in cool temperatures for several weeks will ripen from light red to dark red.

Yield

A partridgeberry plantation can be productive for 20 years or more. Partridgeberry plantations reach full production four to five years after planting and, depending on the site, can yield two to 15 tons per acre.

Pruning

Pruning is not recommended in the first five years. After five years it is recommended to mow plants to a height of two inches. Mowing alternating rows every three to six years will increase shoot density and stimulate vigorous, unbranched growth, therefore increasing fruiting stems.

Propagation

Partridgeberry plants can be propagated by micro propagation (tissue culture) and stem cutting in spring or late summer, and transplanted the following spring or fall.

For more info please contact:

Deanne Simms, Industry Development Officer

Centre for Agriculture and Forestry Development
Department of Fisheries and Land Resources

1 Newbay Road

Wooddale, NL A2A 2K2

Phone: 709.258.2509

Email: deannesimms@gov.nl.ca

Karen Kennedy M.Sc. (Agr.), P.Ag.

Fruit Crop Development Officer & Provincial Apiarist

Department of Fisheries and Land Resources
192 Wheelers Road, P.O. Box 2006

Corner Brook, NL A2H 6J8

Phone: 709.637.2662

Email: karenkennedy@gov.nl.ca

