Pruning and thinning Prime-Ark 45 blackberry for extended season production in coastal California

Mark Gaskell, Farm Advisor
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• Traditional floricane blackberries bear on one-year old wood
  - have a limited production season

• Primocane fruiting varieties fruit on current seasons growth
  - more flexibility to manage harvest season
Primocane fruiting offers new management options
Blackberry, conventional – LA Terminal Market - 2013

The graph shows the sales price (in dollars per flat, 4.5 lb) of Blackberry, conventional from January 1 to December 27, 2013. The price varies over time, with periods of increase and decrease. The data is represented by different markers for CA-high, MX-high, OR-high, and Guat-high.
All Shipping Points

$14.05

Average Price Trend

Feb  Mar  Apr  May  Jun  July  Aug  Sept  Oct  Nov  Dec

Average Price

$0  $5.00  $10.00  $15.00  $20.00  $25.00
Field trials to evaluate timing of mow-down and tip pruning of Primeark-45 blackberry

- Previous research showed advantages to tip pruning for primocane production
  - may also treat has floricane
- Our early trials showed earlier was better Jan VS May
- Mow-down January 15, February 15, March 15
- Important market window remains
  June > December?
Tip pruning > force branching to increase fruiting branches and yield.

- Timing is important
  earlier is better once 18" tall
  "hard" tipping may offer additional advantages? - timing

- When? - Repeat later?
2013 Primeark 45 pruning / tipping trials

• Two sites
  > Nipomo – open field until June
  > Los Alamos – tunnel from beginning

• Mow-down at varying times – January > April
  + floricane – Los Alamos

• Tipping height (Nipomo)
  - 18"
  - 50"
  - 18'/ 50"
  - none
# Total Seasonal Berry Yield (marketable)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pruning Treatment</th>
<th>Yield (lb / acre)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January mow / no tip</td>
<td>8,960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January mow 18&quot; tip</td>
<td>8,481</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January mow 18&quot; tip + 50&quot; tip</td>
<td>10,469</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March mow / no tip</td>
<td>7,697</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March mow / 18&quot; tip</td>
<td>9,530</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March mow / 18&quot; tip + 50&quot; tip</td>
<td>8,518</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May mow / no tip</td>
<td>5,762</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May mow / 18&quot; tip</td>
<td>6,392</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May mow / 18&quot; + 50&quot; tip</td>
<td>6,358</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Weekly marketable blackberry production from tunneled Primeark 45 blackberry with varying mow-down periods – 2013 season, Los Alamos, CA
Total Seasonal Berry Yield (marketable) - 2013
Primocane vegetative growth may be excessive in warm tunnels
Primocane vegetative growth thinning trial
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Questions for future trials

Floricane pruning of Primeark?

• Does elimination of foliage with mow-down affect redberry mite?

• Is traditional redberry control with oils adequate enough to take advantage of earlier harvest resulting from floricane pruning?

• Risk of redberry infestation

In-season pruning?

• What about late season pruning?
  - will August cut back to 3 ft increase October production?

Effects of tunnels, heating?

• Put up plastic as late as possible to minimize vegetative growth, reduce fruiting height?
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