Management Alternatives for Blackberry Production on the Central California Coast

Mark Gaskell, Farm Advisor
University of California Cooperative Extension
San Luis Obispo
Primocane fruiting characteristic adds new options for blackberry producers

- Mild coastal climate is key component
- Fruiting habit permits manipulation of plant growth and fruiting
- Target production for specific market window(s)
California traditional small fruit districts:

- Ventura (Oxnard)
- Santa Maria
- Watsonville

Many other possible sites;
- conditions dictate options, season(s)
Manage for primocane or floricane fruit

- Winter mow-down > July to November harvest
- Fall pruning of primocanes permits winter / spring harvest
- Combination primocane / floricane  
  - each with benefits and shortcomings
- Alternating rows or sections or fields?
Blackberry, conventional – LA Terminal Market - 2013

Sales Price ($ per flat-4.5 lb)

- CA-high
- MX-high
- OR-high
- Guat-high
Timing / site / season dictate tunnel use
Land preparation, residue management
Follow Mexico with main season July > Nov

Production peak in mid August; extend with pruning, tipping

Dependable production, annual thinning, renewal
Primocane harvest with or without floricane harvest

- Mild climate – heat and cold interfere little, chill not required - future?
- Market signals / efficiency guide production
  -- Beyond summer / fall crop?
  -- Mexico volume Dec – June
  -- volume / price?
- Can move, extend production some – pruning
- Uncertainty over future water availability
  -- water quantity, quality, cost
  -- temperatures?
Target Desired Market Windows – Floricane fruit

- Extend main season earlier into May.
  - floricane fruit from winter pruned primocanes

- Late summer, fall pruning, thinning > fruiting branches

- Tunnels allow slow continual harvest through the winter
  - volume in early spring – temperature?
  - fruit size declines, competition?
  - little data > pruning / thinning

- Stable higher prices are possible? market size vs shortcomings
  - local vs import ?
  - certified organic
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>January</th>
<th>February</th>
<th>March</th>
<th>April</th>
<th>May</th>
<th>June</th>
<th>July</th>
<th>August</th>
<th>September</th>
<th>October</th>
<th>November</th>
<th>December</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Strengths and weaknesses, short vs long term still much to learn?
- Redberry mite management
- Tunnels vs soil salinity?
- Plant vigor vs fruit quality?
Management Alternatives for Blackberry Production on the Central California Coast

Mark Gaskell, Farm Advisor
University of California Cooperative Extension
San Luis Obispo