

## Raspberry future

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By Karen Davidson



### **Raspberries for the fresh market.**

Berries are a success story at retailers, but at the moment American-owned Driscoll's owns much of the category with its proprietary varieties. For berry growers in eastern Canada, it's challenging to address even the domestic market with strawberries, let alone expand it with raspberries and blackberries.

Yet the Vineland Research and Innovation Centre hosted a meeting November 28 to explore how growers might take cues from Canadian grocers and how to work back through the value chain to the breeders to produce local varieties that will excite consumers.

“Berries are your friends,” said Peter Chapman, consultant, GPS Business Solutions. “Consumers buy different berries together. Your competition is not other berries.”

Chapman pointed out that the average household buys about 260 SKUs (stock keeping units) per year. That’s out of an average 35,000 SKUs per store. That means consumers are creatures of habit and need a powerful reason to change. If a consumer is in the mood to buy strawberries, then offering raspberries and blackberries beside them, is a chance to encourage trial. Offering local berries is a strong motivator.

“What you pick off the cane, may not be what the consumer sees in their fridge at home,” said Chapman. Taste, appearance and shelf life continue to be the three attributes to strive for. If imported berries don’t excel in flavour, then that’s a niche to perfect for the domestic market.

That’s where more research is required domestically for the best new cultivars. Willem van Eldik, senior fruit berry cultivation consultant Delphy, shared his expertise in terms of propagating and producing long-cane raspberries and blackberries in the Netherlands. To what extent can that knowledge be transferred to Canada?

Growers in attendance from Nova Scotia, Quebec and Ontario debated the merits and discussed next steps. Stay tuned for more in the January 2018 issue of The Grower with a focus on berries.

<http://thegrower.org/news/raspberry-future>