BEACH PLUM NEW CROP DEVELOPMENT

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SEABERRY FARM, LLC
FEDERALSBURG, MD
Native to Northeast and Mid-Atlantic Coastal Dunes. Sprawling shrub to small tree that produces an edible fruit.
Tolerates coarse, low-nutrient, low water-holding soil, thrives on rich soil but not for wet sites or shade.

Profuse white bloom mid-May. Edible fruits (1.5-2.5 cm), purple (rarely-yellow) ripening in Aug.-Sept. in the Northeast U.S.
Montauk Point, N.Y.

Sandy Neck, Cape Cod, Mass.

Westport Point, Mass.
Sandy Neck Dunes, Barnstable, MA, Great Island in Background.
CURRENT STATUS

A history of wild collection throughout its range.

1930s-1940s Frugality and Soil Conservation efforts lead to a concerted new crop development effort in the Cape Cod area. Superseded by WWII and subsequent cultural change.


SARE funding 2001 to 2004 @ Cornell U. myself and Prof. Tom Whitlow

Who is growing it? Diversified farms. Currently about 20 acres under cultivation in MD, NY and NJ.
WHY AREN'T NEW CROPS A FOCUS:

- Researchers are required to serve existing commodity groups which are often perceived as being in trouble.

- Researchers are rewarded for focusing in-depth on one aspect of one crop--new crop development takes a generalist’s approach.

- Farmers tend to identify themselves with one crop and are reluctant to invest in untested systems.

- New crops take time and money. The goals and economies of farmers and researchers are often short term.
Results:
- Culture like other plums.
- Brown rot biggest problem.
- Availability of improved nursery stock limited.

Results:
- Small batch Jelly/Jam manufacturers interested.
- Wineries
- Distilleries
- Chef interest.
- Not a fresh market product.

Results:
- Initial processing poses a barrier to many.
WHO IS GOING TO BUY IT?

° Small batch Jelly/Jam manufacturers interested.

° Wineries

° Distilleries

° Chefs interested

° Not a fresh market product.
PROBLEMS

- Cultivars are not widely available.
- Strong demand but limited market.
- Processing a bottleneck.
  - Medium sized processors expect a bulk, pre-processed product—puree, frozen pitted or juice.
  - Chefs need to buy in small batches and a distribution network is needed.
- The problems listed above are those faced by **MOST new fruit crops**.
Cape May Growers

MISSION STATEMENT . . . dedicated to the promotion and cultivation of the Beach Plum... promote awareness, provide support and information between growers, environmentalists, horticulturalists and the general public...
MECHANICAL FRUIT CLEANING LINE
DAVE VAN VORST & CURTIS CORSON, CAPE MAY, NJ
BRIEREMERE FARMS
CLARK MCCOMBE
RIVERHEAD, NY
Planted in 2007, 3 acres
Produced 12,500 lbs. in 2013, August.
½ are open-pollinated seedlings and ½ are productive selections
Our spacing of 8ft x 12ft is way too tight!!!
SEABERRY FARM
PROPAGATION EFFORTS
CULTIVAR DEVELOPMENT
SEABERRY FARM

- Rutgers 1-1 pending release
- Named cultivars from the 1940’s work:
  - Prunus maritima ‘Premier’

Seaberry Farm Selections
1. S.F. 5
2. S.F. 11
3. S.F. 134
4. yellow
5. Late

- Prunus maritima ‘Hancock’
TOP GRAFTING
CAPE MAY, N.J.  APRIL 9, 2013
Photos courtesy of David Meyers

June, 2010
“Each year the beach plums received on average 4 fungicide sprays for brown rot and 2 herbicide applications, achieving very good fruit quality and yield each year.”

“Very minimum pruning was done each year to open the canopy and to form a fruiting hedge.”

“The site had very low fertility at planting - About 400 lbs. of 10-10-10 per year - It was limed at planting and twice since planting.”
INFO ON THE WEB:

**Cornell University**
www.beachplum.cornell.edu

**Cape May County Beach Plum Association**
www.cmcbeachplum.com
Beach plum is a stone fruit that can be easily cultured on orchard soil with adequate drainage.

A wild collected fruit on the cusp of agriculture.

Goal is not mass production but a high-value niche market.

Processing required, not fresh market.

Market niche: local, native, wild, coastal, heritage crop, gourmet.

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- Barnstable County (UMass) Cooperative Extension
- Many farms in the Northeastern U.S.