

Aronia Update – 2013

Last year, I was thrilled that the aronia ripened about 3-4 weeks early but the growing season had started about one month early. This year, I felt that we also harvested the fruit 2-3 weeks early but spring started about 1 month *late* and there was also a cool period in July. Situations like this keep the orchard very interesting.

We once again saw pear slug sawflies and lacebugs and controlled them with one application of spinosad. Thankfully, I did not see any damage that could be attributed to spotted winged drosophila.



A pollinating fly.

Summer was very dry again and I watered the aronia when the berries were in *véraison*. The berries swelled very quickly after this and reached 17-17.8°Brix by August 25th but did not get any sweeter over the next 3 days. We harvested after this, picking 50-60 pounds of fruit for each variety.

We again found berries that stay reddish color and don't ever ripen. The picking crew was instructed not to pick the red-colored berries ('bad' berries), but they picked all of the fruit on their shrubs. I had more control over two varieties though and here is what I found:

	°Brix				Harvest	'Good'	'Bad'		Weight of 10
Name	8/22	8/25			Date	(grams)	(grams)	% 'bad'	Berries (g)
Nero		17.8			8/27	24056	5735	17.5	8.0
Viking	17.2	16.6			8/28	25225	3590	12.5	8.1

In 2011, I found 'Nero' had 9.1% "bad" fruit and 'Viking' had 15.5%.

The aronia have been planted for 6 years and have had fruit for 5 years. From observations, I would recommend dormant plants be pruned at planting to encourage branching and fullness in the shrub structure. If your plants are in leaf when planted, wait until the next spring and then prune to a good, short structure. This will help to maximize future production and create a really nice plant shape.

Our original plants were tall and leafed out when we got them and I didn't prune them until their 3rd year. This was a mistake which left the plants a bit tall and rangy. In spring 2010, I received four dormant 'McKenzie' plants which I pruned back to 2-3 inches tall. They have grown really well with a lot of branching and had a nice crop this fall. (Although I think 'McKenzie' tend to sucker more from the crown than other varieties). Next spring I will prune the four leafed-out 'Galicjanka' I planted in 2013. Remember that the energy for your plants is in their *roots*, and pruning will stimulate the plant to grow from other dormant buds.