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Acreage Living is published monthly. Please share it with your acreage neighbors. Call your local ISU Extension Office for more information or contact an ISU Extension staff member listed below to suggest topics for future articles.

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Aronia – A New Crop for Iowa

By Eldon Everhart, ISU Extension Horticulture Specialist

What is aronia?

Aronia melanocarpa is a perennial, deciduous shrub, native to the eastern half of the United States. Its native range extends north into Canada and south into Georgia, and includes only Winneshiek County in Iowa. Aronia is cold hardy to at least USDA Zone 3 (-40 degrees Fahrenheit). The cold tolerant blooms open in late spring avoiding most spring frosts. The plants grow well on various soil types from boggy soils that are poorly drained to well-drained sites. The optimum pH is slightly acid (6-6.5) but aronia will tolerate a wider pH range (5-8.5).

Where is aronia grown commercially?

Early in the 20th century aronia was introduced in Eastern Europe, Scandinavia and Russia where high quality large fruited cultivars were selected. Thousands of acres of aronia are now grown in Eastern Europe.

The aronia berry industry in the United States is in the early stages of development. Production is centered on Harrison County in western Iowa. Currently, demand exceeds production. Most growers are planning to at least double their acres in 2009.

Are all aronia cultivars the same?

‘Autumn Magic’ and ‘Iraqis Beauty’ are the two most commonly sold ornamental cultivars of *Aronia melanocarpa*. These cultivars were selected for their ornamental traits. They grow only 3-4 feet tall and have exceptional orange-red fall foliage color on leaves that hang on late into the fall. They also have beautiful white flowers in late spring and shiny dark green leaves that are not damaged by wind or pests. Aronia’s fall leaf color contrasts with its dark purple, edible berries that persist until late winter when songbirds eat them as a last resort. ‘McKenzie’ is a

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cultivar that was selected for its performance in conservation plantings or windbreak plantings, not for commercial berry production. It was released in 2008.

‘Viking’ and ‘Nero’ were selected in Russia for commercial fruit production. In the last 10 years, these two cultivars have been introduced back into the United States. Mature plants of ‘Viking’ aronia are six to eight feet tall with 40 or more shoots per plant. They are the size of a common lilac bush and live just as long.



When and how are aronia berries harvested?

The round, pea-sized (1/3 inch diameter), violet-black berries hang in clusters of up to 12 berries. Berries are harvested after they are ripe in late August or early September. Aronia berries can be harvested by hand or they can be mechanically harvested with a blueberry picker

How are aronia berries used?

Aronia berries can be eaten fresh off the bush or used in bread, muffins, pies, cookies and other baked goods. They can be used to make tea, juice, stand alone aronia wine or blended with

grapes or other fruits. Aronia fruit or fruit juice can be used to make jams, jellies, syrup, candy salsa, barbeque sauce, and to flavor and color yogurt, sorbet, ice cream, milk and other products.

Aronia also makes good wildlife plantings or windbreaks. Its berries provide food for songbirds in mid- to late-winter

What do aronia berries taste like?

Taste is difficult to describe and not all things taste the same to all people. Aronia berries have a distinctive, pleasant flavor

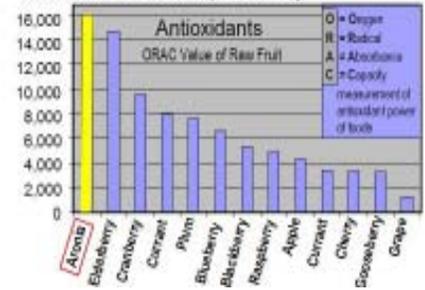
Astringency is the sensation that most people notice first. They will make your mouth pucker. This dry mouth feeling is caused by chemicals known as tannins. Tannins make dry wines dry. Many people like that dry mouth puckering quality of dry wines and aronia berries. Freezing reduces the astringency of aronia berries.

When fully ripe, aronia berries have a sugar content as high as grapes or sweet cherries. They have a high acid content but are not sour when fully ripe.

Do aronia berries have health benefits?

Research has shown that aronia has more antioxidant power than other fruits including grapes, elderberries, blueberries, cranberries, raspberries, blackberries, prunes, cherries, bananas, oranges, apples and pears. Studies have shown that

Aronia – the “Super Berry”



antioxidants help reduce the risk for cancer, heart disease, inflammation, diabetes, bacterial infections and neurological diseases in humans. They also slow the aging process.

Why grow aronia?

Aronia plants are easy to grow and maintain. The plants do not need trellising, spraying or bird netting. Mowing the grass planted between the rows is the only task, other than harvesting the berries, that needs to be done. Aronia is easy to grow organically.

Where can you get more information?

Are You an Aronia Berry Fan?

www.extension.iastate.edu/news/2008/jul/423102.htm

Aronia Surges to the Top of the Superfood List

phoenix.bizjournals.com/phoenix/prnewswire/press_releases/Arizona/2008/08/25/LAM542

Iowa plant could be next cash crop

www.messengernews.net/page/content.detail/id/508675.html?nav=5003

It's the berries

www.desmoinesregister.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=2008809210301

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consider motion sensors that turn on lights when there is activity. Bright lights and good illumination make criminals think twice about approaching because they don't wish to be seen. Use timers on several household indoor lights to give the appearance that someone is home.

Examine your landscaping

Trim bushes and other plants that hide doors or windows or block your security lights. This eliminates hiding places for would-be burglars and adds another level of protection.

Keep your vehicles locked when they're not being used. Never leave keys in the vehicle or equipment. When you store valuables in your vehicle (such as computers, small electronic devices, tools and purses), keep those items out of sight. Don't give burglars a reason to break into your vehicle.

Assess your vulnerability and identify the possible threat for burglary to better understand your risk. These basic suggestions will assist you in making your acreage secure and less likely to be targeted by burglars. Depending

on your level of concern or knowledge about recent burglaries in your area, consider more extensive options such as a barking dog, an acreage watch group and high tech electronic alarm systems.

Additional information:

- <http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/05cius/index.html>
- <http://www.dps.state.ia.us/commis/ucr/2007/iacrime.shtml>
- <http://www.ncpc.org/>
- <http://www.usaonwatch.org/>
- http://www.diynetwork.com/diy/shows_dir/episode/0,2046,DIY_14297_25637,00.html



More Americans feel added stress and anxiety about their financial future as talk of rising consumer debt, falling housing prices, rising costs of living and declining retail sales bring up worries about the nation's economic health.

Money is often on the minds of most Americans. In fact, according to the American Psychological Association's 2007 Stress in America survey, money and work are two of the top sources of stress for almost 75 percent of Americans. Add to the mix headlines declaring a looming economic recession, and many begin to fear how they can handle any further financial crunch.

Learn positive money management techniques to help you and your family adapt to tough economic times.

http://www.extension.org/pages/Financial_Security:_Managing_Money_in_Tough_Times

<http://www.extension.iastate.edu/answers>

... and justice for all

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