



Small Fruit Trial Report

– David Redhage

During the 2001 Horticulture Farm field day, participants toured the small fruit variety trials. The Kerr Center has been setting up the trials since 1998, and Simon Billy manages the projects. Small fruit production may fit the needs of market gardeners who don't have the time or soils to grow vegetables. It may also complement a vegetable production system. In the past, we have grown and marketed strawberries successfully. The small fruit trial now consists of perennial plantings of various fruits. The trials include muscadine grapes, table grapes, blackberries and blueberries.

Muscadine Grapes

Two varieties of muscadine grapes *Nesbitt* and *Fry*— have been planted. We made the first planting of 50 of each variety in February 1998. For reasons unknown, survival was poor. We have tried several different management techniques to increase survival: mulch, no mulch, irrigation, no irrigation, etc. The trial was replanted and the plants left to sprawl during the 2001 growing season with very little irrigation. Survival seems to be good, but the second growing year will determine how well the muscadines survive.

Table Grapes

Two varieties, *Edelweiss* and *Alwood*, have been planted. Both are seeded grapes. Because high heat and humidity tend to create perfect conditions for diseases, eastern Oklahoma is not generally conducive to producing table grapes under a low spray or no spray program. The varieties we are testing were selected based on a reports that they seemed to do well near Fayetteville, Arkansas, under a low spray or no spray program. 25 plants of each variety were planted in the spring of 2001. Survival has been excellent so far, with only two plants lost.

Blackberries

Two new varieties were selected from the Arkansas breeding program. The varieties were *Chickasaw* (thorned) and *Apache* (thornless). We have grown thornless in the past and seem to have trouble with them thriving under our growing conditions. These two varieties were planted in March of 2000. The *Chickasaw* variety yielded extremely well in the spring of 2001. We didn't set up a yield trial since we didn't plan on such a large yield. The thornless variety *Apache* yielded very few berries. Yields from each variety will be recorded in 2002.

Blueberries

Three varieties are currently being evaluated: *Ozarkblue*, *Summit*, and *Blueray*. *Ozarkblue* was release from the University of Arkansas breeding program several years ago. Our planting is currently three years old. Yields were recorded during 2001 and *Ozarkblue* yielded approximately 1 lb. per plant. *Blueray* is generally the most successful blueberry for our area to date and we planted it as a comparison to *Ozarkblue* and *Summit*. There are 25 *Summit* plants currently and we will plant 100 in the spring of 2002. Yields for the new plants will be recorded starting in year three.

