

Open Letter To Prospective Berry Growers From Paul M. Otten Berry Communications

THANK YOU for your interest in berries and berry plants. We are located in the NE Twin Cities metro area, almost dead center between Marine on St. Croix (our mailing address), Scandia, Forest Lake and Hugo – about 28 miles NE of downtown St. Paul.

Although at one time we (under the name of North Star Gardens) shipped berry plants worldwide – literally from China to Chile and a lot of places in between - in more recent years we've focused instead on producing quality berry plants for the development of *local* food security. We've also become a valuable resource center to help berry growers with the knowledge they need to become successful.

With that in mind, **we have zeroed in on helping local/regional growers with berry plants and cultural information** to grow their plants for health (nutrient density), ecological and economic sustainability, and enjoyment. Thus, through MOSES (**MOSESorganic.org**) and otherwise, we have been mentoring berry growers to assist them to be successful from the start, literally from the ground (soil) on up. [Our creed: Healthy Soil = Healthy Plants = Healthy People = Healthy Environment]

From the plant choice perspective, we have done our homework. We have studied the berry industry in person in over a dozen European countries and the Americas (I am multilingual). We have been in leadership roles of berry grower associations locally, nationally and internationally to get continuous feedback on berry cultivars, cultural practices, end use and health benefits. We developed the "Ribes Park International" where we planted and observed some 120 cultivars of currants, gooseberries, and jostaberries, did similarly with raspberries and blackberries, and are presently doing so with elderberries. We've also worked with some 30 cultivars of strawberries, saskatoon, blueberries, aronia, seaberry (sea buckthorn) and table grapes.

From the grower education, training and mentoring perspective, we've partnered with organizations such as LSP (Land Stewardship Project: **landstewarshpproject.org**), MOSES (Midwest Organic and Sustainable Educational Services: **mosesorganic.org**), Women's Environmental Institute (**w-e-i.org**), Minnesota Fruit & Vegetable Growers Association (**mfvga.org**) and others to provide workshops, educational farm tours, hands-on training and field trips. We've also worked with numerous grower associations to help inform and educate their members with articles, presentations. Workshops and other resources.

All this -- sorry for the length; I don't know how to give you a shorter "Executive Summary" -- to let you know you've come to the right place IF you are looking for berry plants and cultural help and plan to grow them somewhere within a few hundred miles of the Twin Cities. It makes little difference to us whether you are a back yard grower or a commercial farmer, a novice or an expert, what specific type of berries you are looking for, if you are investigating their key role in

nutrition and wellness, or simply want to grow them for a very specific end-use, such as bakery, ice cream, wine, vinegar, nutraceutical, whatever.

Now that I've "spilled my guts" about us, perhaps you could **tell me something about you**, your intended use (or dreams of use), purpose of planting, desired berry types, acreage (3 plants or 3000), your location or anticipated planting site, any information on the field history and soil, your personal horticultural, farming or gardening background and experience (or lack thereof - that's OK!), etc.

Perhaps you can tell, that I am not just interested in selling plants. (I know how to make money quicker, faster and easier elsewhere!) I want to make sure you get the right plants for YOUR intended purposes and with sufficient information to be successful in their growth and development. The more I know about you as pertains to purpose of planting and horticultural / gardening / growing experience, the more value I can be to you.

The type of berry plants and their form (dormant cuttings, MaxiPlugs, bare root, dormant or freshly dug in season) vary greatly in a variety of ways. Once I know your berry type and form and quantity of plants you desire, I'll be happy to zero in on your needs and supply you a list of appropriate cultivars, plant forms available, and prices. We are very competitively priced with all major eastern quality berry nurseries (I know almost all of them personally).

I hope I have not overwhelmed you. I prefer e-mails to phone calls because then I can take the time whenever I can fit it into my schedule (a bit selfish motivation!). But, if visiting over the phone is more comfortable for you, please don't hesitate to do so. The next move is up to you. - Paul

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