

‘HYRED’ CRANBERRY: HISTORY, CHALLENGES AND POTENTIAL

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‘HyRed’ is the first patented cranberry and the first major new cranberry cultivar released since the initial USDA cranberry breeding program started in the 1930’s, which resulted in the release of ‘Stevens’ in 1950. The history of ‘HyRed’ will be reviewed from concept to original selection and scale-up to current status. ‘HyRed’ has been very successful in producing very highly-pigmented, early maturing fruit in all regions it has been tested. However, there have been challenges and learning experiences to the initial performance of the cultivar. These include: the release ‘HyRed’ to growers in a way to protect the genetic fidelity of the clone, a disease problem that was associated with part of the release, determining how best to grow this new cultivar for nutrition, harvest and winter protection, and finally determining the potential crop yields on a full-bed basis. These problems have been largely overcome through time and horticultural development and will be detailed. In particular, the isolated presence of Early Rot (caused by the fungus *Phyllosticta vacinii*) in initial ‘HyRed’ releases has been traced to rapid greenhouse production and thin, highly-fertilized field scale-up. Initial results from Rutgers University assays show no unique susceptibility of ‘HyRed’ and growers in Wisconsin, Oregon and British Columbia have been able to successfully grow it without fungicides. The first full beds of ‘HyRed’ are reaching the stage where yield analysis can be performed. In Wisconsin, the initial yield estimates are very high, due in large part to a high berry number per fruiting stem. In Northern Wisconsin the difference between the early-flowering ‘HyRed’ and the later-blooming ‘Stevens’ was particularly extreme due to a cool growing season. It is likely that ‘HyRed’ will be a superior selection for regions with a short growing season and will be a replacement for ‘Ben Lear’ (or other early cultivars) elsewhere where early fruit color and reproducibly high yields are desired.