

COMMODITY

BERRY

Description

Several types of berries are grown commercially in British Columbia. Blueberries, cranberries, raspberries and strawberries are the most prevalent. About 95% of B.C.'s berry production occurs in the Fraser Valley. The rest are grown in the North Okanagan and on Vancouver Island.

Most berries require a mild climate. Some berries require specific soils and growing conditions. Raspberries need sandy, well-drained soils whereas blueberries are grown on a range of soil types which are naturally acidic or adjusted to be acidic. Most cranberries are grown in beds that are flooded to allow convenient efficient harvesting of the crop.

Sand may be applied to berry fields to promote production. In some cases, crops are grown in sawdust beds built up on the native soil. Pollination is critical in berry production.

Berries may be grown for the fresh market or may be frozen and further processed into jam, juice, dried products, yogurt flavoring and ingredients used in baked products. A substantial proportion of British Columbia's berries are exported to eastern Canada, the United States and Europe. Fresh berries – by nature highly perishable – are shipped in refrigerated trucks or by air. Processed products are shipped by truck, rail or cargo ship.

Farm Practices of Particular Interest

Practices for specific farm activities can be found in the Farm Practice section of this reference guide. Farm practices that are of particular interest to berry production include the following.

Aircraft Activities

Farmers may use fixed wing aircraft or helicopters to apply fertilizers to berry crops and sand cranberry bogs. Occasionally, helicopters may be used to assist in cranberry harvesting operations. The B.C. Cranberry Growers' Association's document entitled *Normal Farming Practices for Cranberries in British Columbia* outlines procedures for aerial spraying. Aerial spraying of pesticides, while not a common practice, is permitted if the product is labeled for such use and if appropriate environmental guidelines are followed.

See also Farm Practice: [Mobile Equipment](#)

Crop Protection

Berry farmers may use netting, visual deterrents and noise-scaring devices to protect their crops from birds close to harvest time.

See also Farm Practice: [Stationary Equipment](#)
[Wildlife Damage Control – South Coastal BC](#)
[Wildlife Damage Control – Interior BC](#)

Frost Protection

Berry growers may use wind machines to protect fruit from damage in areas that are prone to frost and in low areas where temperature inversions are more likely to occur. Wind machines are typically activated during the night or early morning hours. Irrigation systems may also be used for frost protection, especially in cranberry production.

See also Farm Practice: [Stationary Equipment](#)
[Irrigation](#)

Irrigation

In some cases, berry fields may require irrigation to grow a viable crop. It is not unusual to operate irrigation systems at any time of the day or night to maximize coverage of field areas. Fertilizers and pesticides may be applied through the irrigation system.

See also Farm Practice: [Irrigation](#)

Pesticides

Farmers may use pesticides to protect crops from disease, insects and weed infestation. The application of pesticides has the potential to harm the environment and can also generate noise disturbances caused by use of spraying equipment. Producers are responsible for adhering to safety guidelines from the time the pesticide is purchased until empty containers or unwanted pesticides are disposed of. Pesticides may be applied at any time of day or night to take advantage of favourable weather conditions.

See also Farm Practice: [Pesticides](#)
[Storage of Hazardous Material](#)

Transportation

Berry producers may operate vehicles 24 hours a day to haul products and make deliveries. Vehicles are also used to transport labour. Producers must supply adequate space on the farm property to handle the volume, movement, and parking of trucks and other traffic related to farm production activities. Operations which sell directly to the public must provide adequate off-road parking for customers.

See also Farm Practice: [Direct Farm Marketing and Agriculture Tourism](#)
[Transportation](#)

Wildlife Control

The use of bird-scaring devices in blueberries is a common practice. Propane cannons are noisy and growers may frequently receive complaints about their use from neighbours. Bird distress calls, orchard pistols or other electronic noise makers are also subject to complaints. Growers are encouraged to use an integrated management approach to control bird damage to crops.

See also Farm Practice: [Wildlife Damage Control – South Coastal BC](#)
[Wildlife Damage Control – Interior BC](#)

Principal and Accessory Buildings

From an operational perspective, principal farm buildings on berry farms are typically those used for produce storage, sorting, separating, cleaning, grading, packing, processing, or direct farm marketing. Accessory farm buildings may include storages for agricultural wastes, chemicals, compost input materials, compost products, and woodwaste. Other accessory structures could include processing facilities, machine sheds, and on-farm composting buildings. From a watercourse protection perspective, however, the definition of principal and accessory buildings may differ. For the purposes of determining applicable setbacks from watercourses and property lines, therefore, local government bylaws or the *Guide for Bylaw Development in Farming Areas* should be consulted. Building assessments may need to be conducted on a case-by-case basis if the designation of a building as principal or accessory is unclear.

Legislation

Agricultural producers are expected to follow all legislation that pertains to their farming operation. The *Farm Practices Protection (Right to Farm) Act* stipulates that the farm operation must meet the *Public Health Act*, *Integrated Pest Management Act*, *Environmental Management Act* and the regulations under those Acts. Information on federal and provincial legislation can be found in Appendices B and C.

Acts that pertain to specific farm activities are listed in the farm practices section of this reference guide. Local government bylaws may also apply to some farm practices. Acts that are not referenced elsewhere and which may be of special interest to berry producers include the following.

Federal Legislation

The *Fisheries Act* prohibits the discharge of deleterious substances such as pesticides into watercourses.

The *Migratory Birds Convention Act* protects migratory birds that inhabit Canada.

The *Canada Wildlife Act* outlines provisions for conservation of wildlife in Canada.

Provincial Legislation

The *Wildlife Act* regulates hunting, angling and management of fish and wildlife resources.

The *Motor Vehicle Act* regulates the movement of farm vehicles and implements on roads.

Local Government Legislation

Local government legislation may include applicable noise bylaws.

Publications

Publications that provide information on berry production include, but are not limited to, the following. Refer to Appendix D for details.

Berry Production Guide for Commercial Growers
British Columbia Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) Guide
British Columbia Environmental Farm Reference Guide
Guide for Bylaw Development in Farming Areas
Normal Farming Practices for Cranberries in British Columbia
On-Farm Food Safety