



Blueberryland: Taming the Maine Wild Lowbush Blueberry

Walter Staples

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What Walter Staples had intended was for this book to be a compilation of unusual circumstances, anecdotes, and stories from his personal experience during a period of twenty years of managing a relatively small blueberry farm. It has become a description of an intimate association with the people and the land of the small town of Wesley in Washington County, Maine, a town not unlike every other blueberry growing town in the state. The industry developed over a period of fifty years from berries picked for family use to more than 100 million pounds produced annually and marketed internationally.

The history of lowbush blueberry production in Maine is the story of 500 or more homesteads pioneered in the 1700s by settlers in a twenty mile-wide band inland and extending the entire length of its Atlantic coastline. Blueberries were one of the more widespread and plentiful berries, and the local Indian tribes had long before discovered the mother lode situated on the barrens. This was a near treeless area of eskers and meadows at the western edge of what has become Washington County along its boundary with Hancock County. Settlement was pressing inland from the seacoast villages during the 1700s, but it was not until the 1900s, when railroad transportation had penetrated the area and factories had learned to preserve the berries by canning, that blueberries became of economic importance and the growing area extended beyond the barrens.

Staples gives a holistic view of the love affair with blueberries which he shares with the residents of his native state Maine. He does this in a wonderfully readable way by mingling personal stories, and facts and figures provided by the Maine Cooperative Extension Service, with recipes for treats as; Wild Blueberry Bundt Cake, Wild Blueberry Cobbler, Blueberry-Apple Jelly, and Wild Blueberry Muffins. Blueberryland gives a true taste of Maine.

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