

DID YOU KNOW...



THE HASKAP

Honeyberry/ Haskap/ Edible Honeysuckle (*Lonicera caerulea* L.)

Originating from the same botanical family of the honeysuckle, the haskap is a super hardy bush with an upright growth, spreading a little bit, with a height varying from 1 to 2 M and a width of 1 M. Japanese were the first one to use it followed by the Russian. The first botanical collection goes back to the 1950s and will be gradually used for breeding work in North America in 1990s. University of Saskatchewan breeding efforts have substantially contributed to developing the curiosity for this crop in North America. The yield of 2 to 4 kg per plants have been observed.

Haskap is a thornless bush that is non-suckering. Flowers can tolerate -7°C and open very early in the spring. The bush itself can stand as cold as -45°C in the winter. Flowering is very early as mid-April depending on the spring. Berries are harvested just before the first summer fruiting strawberries. The haskap fruit is then harvested from early June to end of June.

HASKAP'S SELECTION AND SITE PREPERATION

Haskap will prefer well-drained soil with a good fertility and a pH around 5.5 to 7.0. It can tolerate a wider range of pH, but with lower yields. We suggest choosing sites that fit best for orchards, including a light slope and a prevailing wind protection. The plantation of a wind-break hedge is suggested or necessary. Water supply facilities will also be considered.



HASKAP'S PLANTING AND MAINTENANCE

We recommend planting as soon as possible after plant reception. Upon arrival of plants, unwrapped the box and keep them outside in a carrying tray, and make sure they are well watered until plantations. Space the rows to facilitate the machinery circulation and ease the harvest. We suggest a minimum of 4 M between the rows and the spacing of 1 M on the row. In a heavy soil situation plant on a small hill or mound, mulches are recommended either organic or plastic mulches to control weeds. Organic mulches such as twigs shave or wood shaves will limit weed growth and maintain a good humidity at the base of the shrub. A layer of 15 cm thick is suggested. Drip irrigation is significant for the first years of growth and the feeding the years after.

Planting can be made in early spring followed by irrigation and this for the next three first year. High phosphorous feeding is optional and results are mitigated by the natural level of phosphorous in the soil. One can plant deeper (3 to 5 cm) than the original pot soil level to promote lateral shoots at the plant base.



HASKAP'S POLLINATION

Haskap is not an auto fertile plant and needs one or two different varieties with a compatible genetic to achieve a good fruit set and good size of berries. At the present time, Berry Blue and Aurora offers some of the best compatibility with the other varieties.

There are a lot of different strategies to maximize the efficiency of pollination. Pollinator insects will follow the row when feeding on the flowers, so one can plant a pollinator variety every 4 to 6 plants on the same row to make sure the pollinator insect will grab some of the pollen. Another strategy consists of an alternate variety of each row of a compatible variety.

This will be compatible with mechanical harvesting. Since flowering of Haskap is very early, bumble bees that are more active under cool temperatures will be a good choice for pollination. Any site modification that will encourage bumble bees nesting near the Haskap patch will be worthwhile.



HASKAP'S FEEDING, PRUNING AND NUISANCE

FEEDING

Growth observations on haskap show that raspberry recommendation for soil amendments and feeding will do fine. Fertilize in the first years after the establishment, in early spring is necessary.

Do not overfeed since the root systems are fragile, and make sure you do not put any fertilizer near the main stem. Whether it's organic or synthetic, put the fertilizer at the outer edge of the foliage when looking from the top of the plant.

The use of a drip system will facilitate the split of the fertilizer in smaller quantities during the growth phase. High levels of feeding in early spring will burn the roots as commonly seen in blueberries. After early July gradually decrease feeding and favor magnesium and potash sulfate amendments. For watering, a weekly supply of 2.5 cm including natural waterfall will suffice.

PRUNING

Pruning of the bush is essential to prolong juvenility and lifespan of the stand. This will help open the plant structure to favor aeration and light penetration. This will also be helpful to clean lower branches to ease mechanical harvesting. In theory, you want to rotate the canes every four years. Pruning will start after three to four years of growth after planting. It is recommended to prune in early spring just before bud swelling.

NUISANCE

Haskap can be prone to powdery mildew that will show right after harvest. The leaves will turn brown and may start to dry out if occurrence is high. Preventative fungicide like sulfur base products is a solution to consider before spraying with synthetic fungicides.

This fungus will not kill the plants, neither does it weaken its hardiness. As of today there is no indication that this cause significant yield losses. Birds are attracted by the fruit since there is nothing else that good on the market at that time in spring. Deer have not shown interest so far, rodents although must be controlled in the same way it's done in the blueberries patches.