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Diamond Blueberry continues to expand

By

Keith Loria

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Diamond Blueberry Inc. is gearing up for another blueberry season in New Jersey, something the farm has prepared for over the last eight decades.

“We have a decent crop out there,” said Dave Berger, who heads sales at the Hammonton, NJ-based company. “If Mother Nature gives us a good window, things should be pretty good this summer.”

That’s good news considering 2022 wasn’t the best start of a season. Berger explained that the beginning of the blueberry season was off because of the early spring weather.

“It did pick up in the second half of the season and things ended up doing well on the farm and in the market,” he said.

Diamond Blueberry works with 800 acres of blueberries in Hammonton, a number that has remained steady for the most part over the years.

“I’ve been working with blueberries for 55 years personally, and the farm has been around since the 1940s,” Berger said. “The secret is you need to spend a lot of money to try and make a little money, and you have to have Mother Nature work with you because she’s the one in charge.”

Over the last few years, the company has made some changes to keep up with ever-changing landscape of farming. For instance, it’s added a few picking machines to help with growing labor issues.

“Back years ago, we used to have a lot of hand labor, but the labor market has been down, so we had to switch over to a lot of machines for picking and harvesting,” Berger said. “We’re up to 20 picking machines now.”

Diamond Blueberry has also added several 10,000-square-foot coolers in the past couple of years and will be adding another cooler in 2023.

“It will be our third expansion in three years,” Berger said. “With the picking machines, we pick at night when the weather is cooler because it’s better than doing it in the hot afternoon, and we need a place to cool the berries and get ready for the next day, so the coolers are needed. Plus, the ones we pack need to be in the cooler to cool down.”

The company packs blueberries in pints, 18-ounce, and two-pound clamshells all under the Diamond label.

“Our customers are all over — mostly all the brokers in Vineland, NJ, and we go from Florida all the way to Maine,” Berger said. “The key to keeping them happy is good quality and delivering on time so they can keep their customers happy.”

Although it’s always looking to grow, the main thing for the company is to keep refurbishing the fields with a rotation to keep them as new as possible, so they keep producing over time.

“You’re always hoping for a good season and you try to put yourself in the best position with all the work you do. Everything is day-to-day.” Berger said. “We’re still at it after all these years and hope to continue to grow and keep our customers happy into the future.”

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About Keith Loria |

A graduate of the University of Miami, Keith Loria is a D.C.-based award-winning journalist who has been writing for major publications for close to 20 years on topics as diverse as real estate, food and sports. He started his career with the Associated Press and has held high editorial positions at magazines aimed at healthcare, sports and technology. When not busy writing, he can be found enjoying time with his wife, Patricia, and two daughters, Jordan and Cassidy.

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