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**Blueberries a big part of New Jersey's ag history**

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By

Keith Loria

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The blueberry industry is a key piece of New Jersey's agricultural history. Elizabeth White developed the first cultivated highbush blueberries in the Garden State and was the first woman to receive a citation from the New Jersey Department of Agriculture. She also helped form the New Jersey Blueberry Cooperative Association in 1927.

Since the formation of the New Jersey Blueberry Cooperative Association in 1927, the commercial blueberry industry has worked closely with the New Jersey Department of Agriculture to promote the industry. The relationship has remained strong through the evolution of the industry and New Jersey has been called The Blueberry Capital of the World.

"Blueberries are vital to New Jersey growers as they are the highest value produce crop harvested annually," said Joe Atchison III, NJDA's marketing and development division director. "The state does 38-40 million pounds of fresh berries and 6-8 million pounds of frozen berries in an average year."

The NJDA provides marketing for all New Jersey agricultural products including billboards featuring commodities throughout the season. Blueberries are highlighted with billboards along New Jersey's busiest highways, radio spots, bus posters, print ads, social media posts and a blueberry event day during National Blueberry Month in July along three of New Jersey's boardwalks — Atlantic City, Seaside Heights and Wildwood.

"The blueberry industry in New Jersey works closely with the state's land grant university, Rutgers, to provide ongoing variety trials with an emphasis on taste and yields and blueberries that are more climate resilient allowing growers to continue to provide the top-quality fruit consumers have come to love," Atchison said.

Denny Doyle, chairman of the NJ Blueberry Industry Advisory Council (NJBIAC), noted that to be successful, growers must provide tonnage of top-quality product with consistent delivery.

"Smaller growers who see a challenge in remaining competitive on the wholesale market may need to seek alternate strategies in retail/direct sales," he said "The NJDA has been a tremendous partner with the NJBIAC through the years. They assist us with creative strategy development and execution, and help connect us with other agencies in the state that impact our industry."

Last year's blueberry crop was down slightly due to a late spring freeze and resulted in New Jersey growers producing just over 34 million pounds of blueberries, compared to 2021 when they produced almost 42.5 million pounds.

New Jersey is projecting a full, robust crop beginning the second week of June and concluding in

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early August. It's expected to exceed last year's harvest.

“Consistency of taste profile afforded by the varieties we grow and the soil that allows for good drainage leads to berries that are full of excellent flavor,” Doyle said. “Stores can increase sales by making it easy for blueberry customers to make a simple dish by cross promoting Jersey Fresh blues with pastries, fresh-made whipped cream and/or other berries ideal for baking. The most important thing retailers can do is to continue sourcing bigger, better, full-of-flavor blueberries from New Jersey growers.”

[Keith Loria](#)

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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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