

Reign as Wisconsin Cranberry Capitol



These two and one-half acre fields alongside Little Trout Lake in Vilas County are being planted on Weber marsh. Each field is diked and ditched for water control. In foreground is cutter for

chopping vines before planting and two bulkheads under construction for field in background. Pumps can throw 18,000 gallons a minute into channels if frost threatens crop.

Vilas-Oneida Area, Northwest Part of State Under Cultivation

By EVERETT SWINGLE

Sentinel Farm Editor

BOULDER JUNCTION, Wis., July 5—Sectional rivalry in cranberry production in the next five years may see a four-county area in the north or a three-county area in the northwest part of Wisconsin take the crown away from the Wisconsin Rapids area.

It's a big money venture. In Vilas and Oneida Counties, marsh owners are spending \$1,400 to \$1,500 an acre in clearing and leveling marsh. They may have up to \$3,000 an acre invested before the first crop arrives in three years.

Eight owners in the Manitowish Waters area are developing or have recently planted 184 acres to cranberries. They have about 100 acres still open for development.

RIGHT PEAT FOUND

At Three Lakes in Oneida County, Vernon Goldsworthy of Wisconsin Rapids and Ralph Sampson have 85 acres in cranberries. In this one area Goldsworthy owns enough marsh to expand to 1,000 acres. The right acid peat and acid waters are there.

Vilas County's Manitowish Waters marshes once were owned by Goldsworthy. He continues to manage the Weber marsh owned by Clarence Weber of Shawano. Thirty-four acres are planted.

The Herbert Indermuehle marsh now has 30 acres planted. Howard Folson has 25 acres in and room for 25 more. Thurman Doman has 15 acres scalped and nearly ready for planting. Delbert Bartling has planted 20 acres and has another 20 for development. Frank Koller and his father-in-law, Bert Leasure, have put in 25 acres and have room for another 20. John McFarland has 25 and room for 25. Harold Gross of Chicago has 10 acres ready to plant next spring and room for another 10.

100 BARRELS AN ACRE

At \$27 a barrel on the fresh market last fall, growers were able to pay \$1.50 an hour for

harvest labor and still do well. A barrel holds 100 pounds. State average yields of 40 to 50 barrels an acre are common. The new marshes are expected to run around 100 barrels an acre.

The old established cranberry marshes are those in the central part of the state. There's Wood County with about 900 acres; Jackson and Monroe with about 400 acres each and Juneau with about 250 acres. But the best marsh land is filled and little expansion is possible.

Burnett, Sawyer and Washburn Counties in the northwest have about 500 acres total. But here, as in Vilas, Oneida, Lincoln and Langlade there are good marsh prospects. Growers look for "brown bush" peat with acid waters for flooding and irrigation.

An expert in the business is Abner Alexander, operating the Weber marsh under Goldsworthy's management. Soil tests come first on a marsh, he explains. Then caterpillar bulldozers scalp off about four to eight inches. Level fields of two to three acres are formed. Ditches are dug around the edges for irrigation.

VINES BY THE TON

"Vines from established marshes are bought by the ton," Alexander says. "These are chopped to about eight inch lengths and scattered over a field. Then wheeled equipment is used to press these vines into the peat. The planting is permanent unless disease or winterkilling occur."

Hazards are obvious. Mixed with price fluctuations, there may be labor scarcity in harvest times. False blossom, blight or leaf hoppers sadden marsh owners and leave consumers with fruit scarce and high priced.

But through the years the Wisconsin growers average about a dollar a barrel more than those in Massachusetts, top state, or the lesser states of New Jersey, Washington and Oregon. Freight makes the difference to the Middle West markets.



Planted only May 15, these young cranberry plants have gained thrift after fertilizing and frequent showers the past two weeks. Abner Alexander scans growth of young plants due to bear in 1950 or 1951.



Abner Alexander measures depth of hand-cut ditch around new peat field nearly ready for cranberry vine planting. Ditches are two feet deep and contain a foot of water below field level.

Sentinel photos by Everett Swingle.

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