

# Kestrel Perch Berries: A U-pick CSA

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## BACKGROUND:

- In the 1980: fruit/veg gardener for a residential school community.
- Watched CSAs I belonged to struggle to provide small fruit in addition to veg.
- A bright idea on moving to Ithaca (EcoVillage, which already had a well-established veg. CSA): do berries separately!

## LOCATION/OPPORTUNITIES:

- Urban fringe location 2 miles from downtown Ithaca
- Existing U-pick options are farther away & offer a limited number of varieties each; chances looked good for a U-pick enterprise offering a full season of fruit in one place.
- Unique target market: Farm located on EcoVillage property, which is home to 2 housing co-ops (30 hh each) plus a veg CSA farm, each with opportunities for (electronically enhanced) word-of-mouth.
- Other advantages: Secure lease, share machinery w/ veg CSA farm.

## CROPS/ACREAGE

- 4 fenced acres (deer!), 2 currently planted Approx. ¼ acre each: strawberries, summer red raspberries, black raspberries, black currants, gooseberries, red currants, blackberries (formerly), fall red raspberries.
- Going in the ground in 2011: blueberries, bush pie cherries

## MARKETING CHANNELS:

- Primary focus on u-pick season memberships (CSA):
  - Minimize need for selling time/labor (BUT: CSA organization & communication takes a lot of time!)
- From the beginning, some public (Pay-As-You-Go) u-pick offered as well.
- Change over time: different share types in response to seasonal variations in CSA participation
  - Offered STRAWBERRIES-ONLY (June) and JAM-MAKER'S SPECIAL (July) shares in addition to full season (now June/July) shares
  - CSA season shortened to June/July; blackberries and fall red raspberries switched to PAYG)
  - Plan to go back to a longer CSA season when there's enough fruit (blueberries!) to support it.
- Dealing with the occasional surplus:
  - Restaurant sales
  - Wholesale (local co-op; processing kitchen)
  - Gleaning: Members' extras; donations to afterschool & camp snack programs. Thorough picking of highly perishable varieties improves later picking for everybody!