

Aronia

Aronia melanocarpa (Rosaceae)

Fast Facts:

Number of Growers: less than 5 Acres in Washington: less than 5
--

**Description
of crop:**

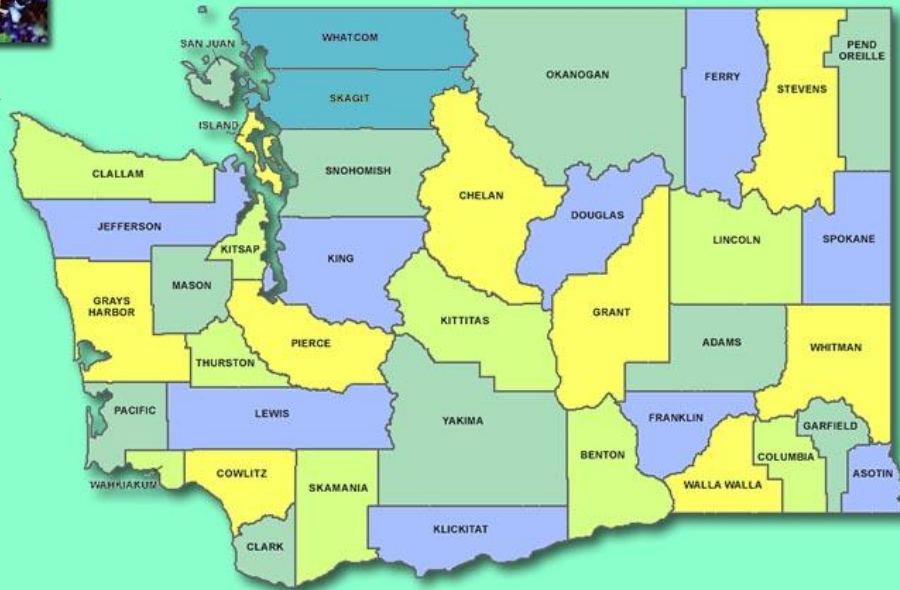
Aronia is a native North American plant popularized in eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, particularly after World War II. Designated a “healing plant,” cultivars were developed for fruit production. The fruit is valued for its juice, which is very high in anthocyanins, blends well with other fruit juices, and is considered to be a source of “phenols, leucoanthocyanins, catachines, flavonoles, and flavones” that are bioactive in humans (Finn, see below.) The juice also has very strong colorant properties; it is used in natural food coloring and also to impart a deeper red color to red wines.

Washington has had aronia plants since 1998 and found that while plants do well and show no sign of disease, their productivity has been only moderate. This crop will have to be protected from birds because they devoured the berries before harvest. Other than that, we have observed no major pest problems thus far. Aronia has potential for mechanical harvest but any prospective grower must line up a market before planting extensively. Productive clones will need to be selected, as some available plants were selected as ornamentals, not for high yield potential. At this point, growers need to proceed carefully in choosing this crop. The greater challenges lie in developing an infrastructure and business plan for a profitable industry that can compete with low cost bulk juice imports from Europe. Here again it might be possible to engage a niche market in the health food sector, but the competition for shelf space puts an unknown product at a serious disadvantage.



Aronia Production in Washington State

Aronia



■ Area of Aronia Production

SOURCES:

1. Moulton, G.A. and King, J. "New Alternative Fruit Crops for Western Washington." WSU-NWREC, 2006. pg. 15
2. *Oregon State Plant Foods Index: Aronia*
3. *Temperate Berry Crops*, Chad Finn, p. 324-334. In: J. Janick (ed.), *Perspectives on new crops and new uses*. ASHS Press, Alexandria, VA (1999)
http://www.hort.purdue.edu/newcrop/proceedings_1999/v4-324.html#chokeberry