



College of Agriculture and Life Sciences

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## **Beach Plum Project receives renewed funding**

### **Formation of consortium shifts focus to market development, industry growth**

[April 21, 2003]

The Beach Plum Project based at Cornell University has received additional funding for two years from the USDA Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program. "We've refined our project focus," says project coordinator Rick Uva. "For the next two years, we're concentrating on working with beach plum growers, processors, and marketers to facilitate market development and industry growth in the Northeast region."

Uva and principal investigator Thomas Whitlow met in March with the industry representatives who make up the project's advisory board to consider the future of the project and the industry. The group decided to form the Beach Plum Consortium, which will hold its first official meeting May 8. At that meeting, the Consortium will develop a mission vision and goals, set priorities, consider horticultural research needs, and discuss future funding sources.

At the March meeting, the group got the ball rolling by starting a "SWOT" analysis – discussing beach plum's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. See notes below to get a flavor for the discussion.

If you would like to attend the May 8 meeting, contact Uva by phone (607-255-2746) or email ([rhu1@cornell.edu](mailto:rhu1@cornell.edu)).

### **Notes from the Beach Plum Advisory Board Meeting**

March 20, 2003

#### **Consortium Goals:**

Control own destiny  
Ensure quality & authenticity  
Protect market share

#### **Potential Consortium Actions:**

1. What is the definition of "Beach Plum" - avoid adulteration
  - DNA Fingerprints to identify regional differences
  - Define the product and the process

## 2. Certification

- Regional I.D. - Cape Cod, East End Long Island, Cape May
- Organic
- Quality control
- Grade A certification

## 3. Consumer Education

- Bridge generation gap
- Reach out to new groups

## 4. Marketing

## 5. Engage state and federal regulators for labeling issues and regulatory advise

## 6. Develop commercial kitchen - only 1 available in Massachusetts

## 7. Help develop pitting & IQF (individual quick frozen) products to supply chefs

## 8. Develop science-based claims

- Brix, pH
- Health benefits, antioxidant content

## 9. Help solve grower problems

- Cultural/production problems
- New varieties - Early, etc.
- Marketing

## **Other Possible Consortium Members:**

1. Chefs
2. Grower data base
3. Processors
4. Mass. Specialty food - Dept. of Ag. (Elke)

## **Next meeting:**

May 8, 03 10:00 am, Coonamessett Farm

### Agenda

- Consortium mission vision goals
- Priorities/actions
  - How to accomplish them
- Horticultural research needs
- New sources of funding

## **SWOT Analysis for the Beach Plum Industry**

### **Strengths**

- Mystique
- Limited production
- High storability - freezable, dryable
- High anti-oxidant content
- Unique
- Tartness - little goes along way
- Crop protection approved for production

### **Weaknesses**

- Alternate year bearing - fluctuating availability
- Production practices
- No reliable vegetative propagation methods
- Pest problems
- Labor intensive to harvest and to sort for processors
- No established quality standards
- Consumer ignorance on the taste of beach plum

### **Opportunities**

- Fruits can be preserves (frozen)
- Consumer education
- Maintain list of consumers
- Vintage years-use to promote bumper crop
- Other products: wine, vinegar, ice cream, sorbet
- Certification standards vary with products, ie amount of beach plum fruit
- Demand exists for supply
- Organic production

### **Threats**

- Large scale production will lower the price
- Adulteration
- Dilution
- Market confusion (product identification)