

Title A survey of fruit firmness in highbush blueberry and species-introgressed blueberry cultivars.
Authors Ehlenfeldt, M. K. and Martin, R. B., Jr.
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Abstract

Eighty-seven highbush blueberry and species-introgressed blueberry cultivars were evaluated for fruit firmness in the 1998-2000 growing seasons with a FirmTech 1 automated firmness tester. Significant differences were observed among cultivars. An average firmness of 136.1 g.mm⁻¹ of deflection (g.mm⁻¹ dfl) was observed across all studied cultivars, and a range of 80.4 g.mm⁻¹ dfl ('Herbert') to 189.0 g.mm⁻¹ dfl ('Pearl River'). Species ancestry was not consistently related to firmness; however, cultivars with higher firmness values often possessed a higher percentage of *Vaccinium darrowi* Camp and *V. ashei* Reade ancestry. Conversely, cultivars with softer than average fruit often possessed a higher percentage of lowbush (*V. angustifolium* Ait.) ancestry. This information may help to identify sources of breeding material for increased firmness in highbush blueberry hybrids.