



GPG Times

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## A New Generation of Oregon Blueberry Genetics



Jamie Petchell

### GPG and Oregon Blueberry launch four new varieties at International Open Day

In July, Global Plant Genetics and Oregon Blueberry welcomed licensed nurseries, growers, consultants, marketers and industry specialists from across the world to an International Open Day in Oregon.

The event provided guests with an exclusive opportunity to explore the Oregon Blueberry breeding programme and marked the international launch of four new varieties:

Together, the introductions demonstrate the breadth of the breeding programme, with options for high-chill and low-to-mid chill regions, traditional soil production, substrate systems and machine-harvested programmes.

Each variety has been selected to address the increasingly demanding requirements of growers, retailers and consumers, including fruit size, firmness, flavour, yield, production efficiency and post-harvest performance.

OREGON  
BLUEBERRY

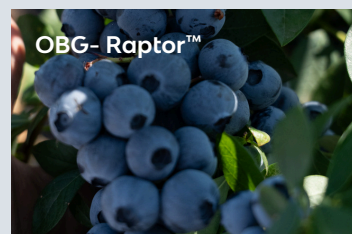
NURSERY • GENETICS • FARM



OBG-Astoria



OBG-Belair™



OBG-Raptor™



OBG-Sirocco™





## OBG-Sirocco™

### OBG-Sirocco™: built for the future of intensive production

OBG-Sirocco™, selection OBG-20010, is an exciting low-to-mid chill Southern Highbush variety developed with modern production systems firmly in mind.

Its compact plant habit makes it particularly well suited to substrate, controlled and high-density production, where efficient space use and streamlined plant management are becoming increasingly important. Despite its compact structure, OBG-Sirocco™ delivers impressive productivity, recording 8.4 kg per plant from four-year-old plants in 2025.

The fruit is a major highlight. Berries averaged 21.8 mm in diameter and an exceptional 4.98 g in weight, making OBG-Sirocco™ the largest-fruited of the four new introductions. Its mid-blue berries carry an excellent bloom, creating the strong visual impact required for premium fresh-market programmes.

Firmness is another standout characteristic, with a four-week average of 339 g/mm and strong performance following cold storage. This exceptional firmness offers clear advantages for harvesting, packing, transportation and longer supply chains.

Combining very large fruit, exceptional firmness, early productivity and a highly efficient plant habit, OBG-Sirocco™ represents an exciting step forward for intensive blueberry production in low-to-mid chill regions.



## OBG-Belair™

### OBG-Belair™: vigour, productivity and fresh-market performance

OBG-Belair™, selection OBG-20062, is a powerful new Southern Highbush variety combining strong plant vigour with excellent early productivity and high-quality fruit.

Designed for low-to-mid chill production regions, OBG-Belair™ has demonstrated exceptional yield potential, producing 9.0 kg per plant from four-year-old plants. Its vigorous growth habit supports rapid establishment and the development of highly productive commercial plantings.

The berries are large and visually attractive, averaging 20.5 mm in diameter and 4.38 g in weight. A mid-blue colour and excellent bloom support premium presentation, while a balanced flavour profile of 11.4% Brix and 2.6% titratable acidity provides strong consumer appeal.

OBG-Belair™ also recorded an impressive four-week average firmness of 327.8 g/mm, with fruit maintaining strong post-harvest performance under cold storage. This creates exciting potential for growers and supply-chain partners requiring berries capable of handling transport while retaining their quality.

With its combination of vigour, high early-age yield, large fruit and excellent firmness, OBG-Belair™ offers a highly commercial package for growers seeking productivity without compromising fresh-market quality.





## OBG-Astoria

### **OBG-Astoria: a premium new contender for the Draper window**

OBG-Astoria, selection OBG-18064, brings an exciting new option to high-chill, mid-season blueberry production. Fruiting within the established Draper harvest window, it combines the commercial reliability growers need with the fruit quality expected by today's premium fresh market. The berries immediately stand out for their size and presentation, averaging 20.8 mm in diameter and 4.3 g in weight, with an attractive mid-blue colour and excellent bloom. This is supported by a balanced and highly appealing flavour profile, recording 13.0% Brix and 5.9% titratable acidity.

Commercial performance is equally encouraging. OBG-Astoria produced 9.9 kg per plant from six-year-old plants in 2025 and maintained strong firmness and post-harvest quality throughout four weeks of cold storage.

With medium plant vigour and suitability for both soil and substrate systems, OBG-Astoria brings together size, flavour, firmness and dependable productivity. It is a compelling new candidate for growers looking to strengthen their mid-season fresh-market offering with fruit capable of delivering both premium presentation and repeat consumer appeal.



## OBG- Raptor™

### **OBG-Raptor™: a new standard for Rabbiteye blueberries**

OBG-Raptor™, selection OBG-16252, is one of the most exciting and potentially disruptive introductions within the new portfolio.

Developed to challenge traditional expectations of Rabbiteye blueberries, OBG-Raptor™ retains the vigour, resilience and production efficiency associated with the species while delivering a significantly improved fresh-market eating experience.

Its large, uniform berries average 19.3 mm in diameter and have an exceptionally low seed count, without the gritty texture sometimes associated with traditional Rabbiteye fruit. With 14.6% Brix and flavour described as comparable to Highbush quality, OBG-Raptor™ has the potential to transform consumer perceptions of the category.

The variety also delivers outstanding productivity. Oregon trial data recorded 17.1 kg per plant from seven-year-old plants, while strong firmness and consistent four-week post-harvest performance support both fresh and processed market opportunities.

Maturity is concentrated into just one or two pickings, creating opportunities to improve harvest efficiency and reduce labour requirements. The vigorous, grower-friendly plant also offers simpler canopy management, rain-split resilience and strong suitability for machine harvesting.

OBG-Raptor™ combines exceptional yield potential, resilience and production efficiency with the fruit quality demanded by modern markets. It is not simply another Rabbiteye variety; it represents a genuine opportunity to redefine what the category can deliver.





# Introducing Ervin: The Latest Introduction - NC State's Breeding Programme



Global Plant Genetics is pleased to introduce Ervin, an exciting new florican blackberry from North Carolina State University's renowned breeding programme.

Ervin is the second patented blackberry released by NC State breeder Dr Gina Fernandez and follows more than four years of extensive evaluation and trials. The variety has now been licensed to Global Plant Genetics for development outside the United States, marking the beginning of its journey into international markets.

As the international representative for Von, also developed by NC State, GPG has already seen the considerable potential of the university's blackberry genetics. Von has achieved impressive results across a range of commercial production systems, helping to build confidence among growers and establish a strong position within the premium fresh blackberry market.

Ervin represents the next generation of this successful breeding programme.

Developed for the modern blackberry consumer, Ervin has been selected for its exceptional eating quality. Its flavour profile combines increased sweetness with lower acidity, delivering the enjoyable and balanced experience increasingly demanded within the premium fresh-fruit category. As an earlier-season florican variety, Ervin also naturally complements the later harvest window of Von.



Together, the two varieties offer the potential to extend the supply season while providing growers and marketers with access to two premium blackberries originating from the same trusted programme.

Alongside its excellent flavour, Ervin has demonstrated exciting commercial productivity and strong yield potential. These characteristics make it an important addition to the developing GPG blackberry portfolio and a promising opportunity for growers seeking distinctive genetics for premium fresh-market production.

The launch of Ervin also showcases the value of long-term scientific research and carefully focused plant breeding. Through extensive selection and evaluation, the NC State programme continues to deliver genetics that respond to the evolving requirements of growers, supply chains and consumers.

Von has already demonstrated what these genetics can achieve internationally. We look forward to building on that success with Ervin and exploring the contribution this next-generation variety can make to the future of the global blackberry market.





# Serbia Visit: Highlights a Berry Industry Looking to the Future

Jamie Petchell



One of the highlights of our recent international travel programme was a visit to Serbia, where we spent several days with our valued partners, Zeleni Hit, visiting commercial raspberry, blackberry and blueberry production across the country.

It was a pleasure to spend time with Neša Momirović, Smiljana Momirović, Nevena Batić and Milica Momirović, whose technical knowledge, professionalism and commitment to innovation continue to make Zeleni Hit an outstanding partner for GPG.

During the visit, we reviewed commercial plantings of Glen Mor, Glen Dee and Skye raspberries, together with Natchez and Von blackberries, while also discussing the future opportunities presented by Pinnacle and exciting new selections from the Oregon Blueberry breeding programme.



Beyond the varieties themselves, our conversations focused on the future of berry production in Serbia. The country continues to build on its global reputation for raspberries, while fresh-market production is expanding alongside the traditional IQF and processing sectors. Domestic demand for fresh berries is also increasing, creating new opportunities for growers investing in modern genetics and production systems.

Climate change was another key topic, with growers reporting milder winters and fewer chilling hours than in previous decades. These changing conditions reinforce the importance of breeding programmes that continue to deliver varieties capable of meeting tomorrow's production challenges.



Visits like these are an important reminder that successful partnerships are built through time in the field, open technical discussions and a shared commitment to continuous improvement. We would like to thank everyone at Zeleni Hit for their warm hospitality and look forward to continuing our work together as the Serbian berry industry enters its next exciting chapter.



# Celebrating the UC Davis Strawberry Team

Rupert Hargreaves



**The University of California, Davis Strawberry Breeding Programme is entering an exciting new chapter.**

Global Plant Genetics would like to thank the valued team members who have recently retired or moved on from their roles, while welcoming those now leading the development of the next generation of UC Davis strawberries within one of the world's foremost strawberry breeding programmes.

**Distinguished Professor Steven Knapp led the programme from 2015 until his retirement, overseeing major advances in strawberry breeding, genetics and genomics. His work strengthened the programme's focus on disease resistance, fruit quality, yield and modern breeding technologies. Strawberry breeder Glenn Cole brought extensive commercial experience to the selection, testing and development of new varieties, helping ensure that breeding progress delivered practical benefits for growers, nurseries and the wider industry.**

Together with the wider UC Davis team, Steven and Glenn contributed to an exceptional period of varietal development, including the Royal Royce generation, and the more recent UC Eclipse, UC Golden Gate, UC Keystone, UC Monarch and UC Surflin.

**We also thank Michael Carriere for his important contribution to Plant Variety Licensing. His expertise in intellectual property, licensing and commercialisation helped create pathways for UC Davis innovations to reach nurseries and growers around the world.**

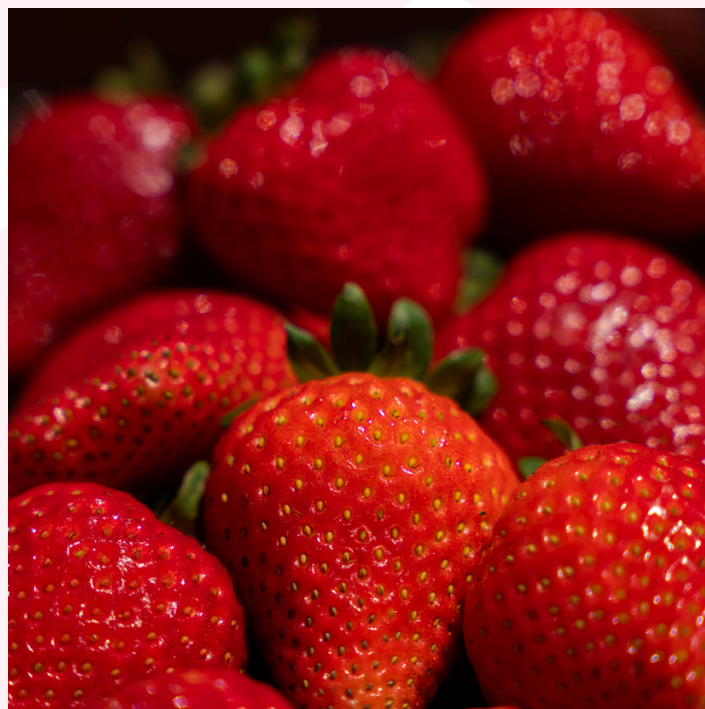
**GPG now looks forward to working even more closely with Dr Mitchell Feldmann, Director of the Strawberry Breeding Program.**

His research combines genetics, genomic selection, high-throughput phenotyping and data-led breeding to address key challenges including disease resistance, fruit quality and production efficiency.

**We are also pleased to continue developing our relationship with Isaac Rainwater, recently promoted to Assistant Director of Plant Variety Licensing, who will support the protection, licensing and global commercial development of UC Davis varieties with GPG.**

As an international master licensee for UC Davis strawberry genetics, GPG is proud to support the journey of these varieties from breeding and selection through to licensed nurseries and growers worldwide.

We sincerely thank Steven, Glenn and Michael for their contribution and look forward to the next chapter with Mitchell, Isaac and the wider UC Davis team.





# A New Perspective on the Berry Industry

## Dom Butkus

When I joined Global Plant Genetics in November 2025, the agriculture and berry industries was completely new to me. My background in social media and marketing had given me experience across a wide range of industries, but I had never previously worked within agriculture. Since joining GPG, I have been able to develop my understanding by seeing berry crops growing in the field and learning directly from the experts within our team, as well as from breeders, growers, licensees and partners around the world.



Visiting strawberry production and research sites in California, blackberry and raspberry plantations in Serbia, and blueberry fields in Oregon has provided an invaluable introduction to the industry. Seeing the plants, fruit and growing systems first-hand has helped me understand the differences between each crop and the conditions required for varieties to perform successfully. The knowledge shared by the people working directly with these crops has given me an entirely new appreciation for the relationship between genetics, growing practices, climate, fruit quality and commercial performance.

One of the biggest surprises has been discovering the extraordinary amount of work behind the development of a single variety. Before entering the industry, I had not realised how many years of breeding, research, trials, evaluation and selection are required before a variety reaches commercial growers. Every variety has its own history, purpose and unique combination of characteristics. The level of detail involved, from disease resistance and harvest timing to firmness, flavour, yield and shelf life, continues to surprise me and demonstrates the incredible expertise found throughout this industry.

From a marketing perspective, gaining this knowledge has been extremely valuable. Understanding the history behind the varieties and seeing their performance in the field allows me to communicate their benefits with greater confidence and authenticity. It also creates much stronger opportunities for storytelling,

helping us demonstrate not only what makes a variety different, but also the people, research and commitment behind its development.

A slightly unexpected consequence of tasting the varieties represented by GPG is that I am now far less enthusiastic about buying berries from my local supermarket in the UK. After experiencing fruit directly from the plant and tasting the quality, firmness and flavour of the varieties we represent, the difference can be difficult to ignore. It has certainly changed the way I look at the berries available on the shelf and made me appreciate how important varietal selection and careful production are to the final eating experience.



Another highlight has been meeting the people who make up this global industry. Every breeder, grower, partner and colleague I have met has been welcoming, respectful and generous with their knowledge. Working with people across different countries and cultures has been one of the most rewarding parts of the role, and I have genuinely enjoyed every opportunity to meet and learn from them.



My first months within the berry industry have shown me that there is always something new to discover. I am grateful to be part of GPG and to work within an industry built around innovation, collaboration and long-term relationships. I look forward to continuing to learn more about the crops, the genetics and the people behind them and, perhaps one day, becoming something close to an expert myself.



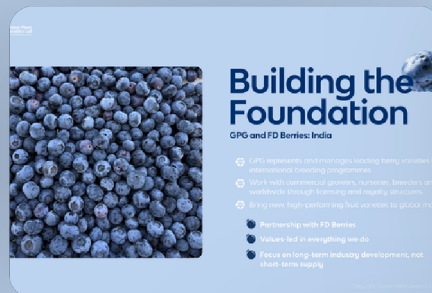
# The Road Ahead for Blueberries in India



Global Plant  
Genetics Ltd®  
Where Quality Breeds Success



Presented By: Jamie Petchell



## Building Momentum for Blueberries in India

Jamie recently attended the 2026 Fresh India Show in Mumbai alongside GPG's licence holders, FD Berries India.

The event reflected the rapid development of India's blueberry industry. Conversations are increasingly focused on commercial variety selection, production systems, fruit quality and the long-term opportunities offered by the country's growing market for healthy, premium produce.

During the conference, Jamie discussed the potential for blueberry production in India, as well as the importance of combining suitable genetics with strong technical support and reliable supply chains. Through its partnership with the University of Georgia breeding programme, GPG is working with FD Berries India to introduce zero and low-chill varieties including Maverick, Gladiator, Tropical Blue and Sweet Duchess. These varieties have been selected for warmer growing conditions and offer the fruit size, firmness, quality and shelf life required for commercial production.

The interest and investment seen in Mumbai demonstrate the significant progress being made. With modern genetics, experienced local partners and increasing grower knowledge, India is well positioned to become an important future market for blueberries.

The following update from FD Berries India shares an early insight into how Maverick is already performing under local growing conditions.



**Early trials of Maverick in the Hindupur region of Andhra Pradesh are delivering exceptionally promising results. Establishing blueberries in this part of Southern India presents significant climatic challenges, with peak summer temperatures soaring well over 44°C between March and May.**

**Now five months post-planting, the crop has shown impressive stamina. Supported by right management practices—including targeted fogging systems for microclimate moderation—the plants sustained healthy growth and strong vigor despite the extreme heat wave. Maverick's ability to thrive under these demanding conditions marks an exciting milestone for Zero -chill, warm-climate blueberry production in India.**

Abhishek Rao - FD Berries





# Fruit for the Future at the James Hutton Institute

*Bonnie Neugebauer*

We recently joined the James Hutton Institute for its Fruit for the Future event, bringing together breeding, research, technology and the wider soft fruit industry for a fascinating look at what could be coming next.

Throughout the day, we explored the Institute's work across raspberries, blackberries, and blueberries, including a closer look at the development of its raspberry breeding programme. From the established Glen varieties through to newer genetics such as Skye, it was a great opportunity to see how years of breeding and research continue to translate into new opportunities for growers and the wider market.

The event also featured a range of technologies showcased by sponsors, offering a glimpse into how future production systems may evolve. These included IGS vertical growing towers using LED lighting to establish healthy young plants, robotic systems designed to monitor crops and capture images, autonomous follow-behind equipment to help transport heavier workloads, and innovative electric weed-control technology.

The day finished with a tasting session featuring fruit from the breeding programme, with Glen Mor proving a particular favourite. It was a great way to round off an event that highlighted not only the strength of the genetics coming through the James Hutton Institute, but also the exciting role technology and innovation are likely to play alongside them in the future.



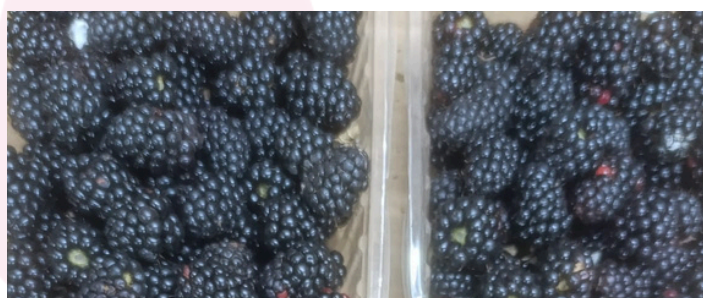
## Juhas Delivers Strong Early Performance in Israel

Juhas blackberry is showing highly encouraging performance in Israel, with strong crops of high-quality fruit demonstrating the variety's commercial potential.

Developed by NIWA, Juhas is an early season primocane variety designed to extend the cropping window and maintain fruit supply over a longer period. It combines very high yields with a sweet flavour and concentrated ripening, helping growers reduce the number of harvest passes and associated picking costs.

The variety also demonstrates a strong lack of red-cell reversion, supporting consistent fruit quality and presentation throughout the supply chain.

We look forward to following the continued progress of Juhas in Israel and across other growing regions, as further commercial experience highlights its potential to support extended supply, efficient harvesting and high-quality blackberry production.





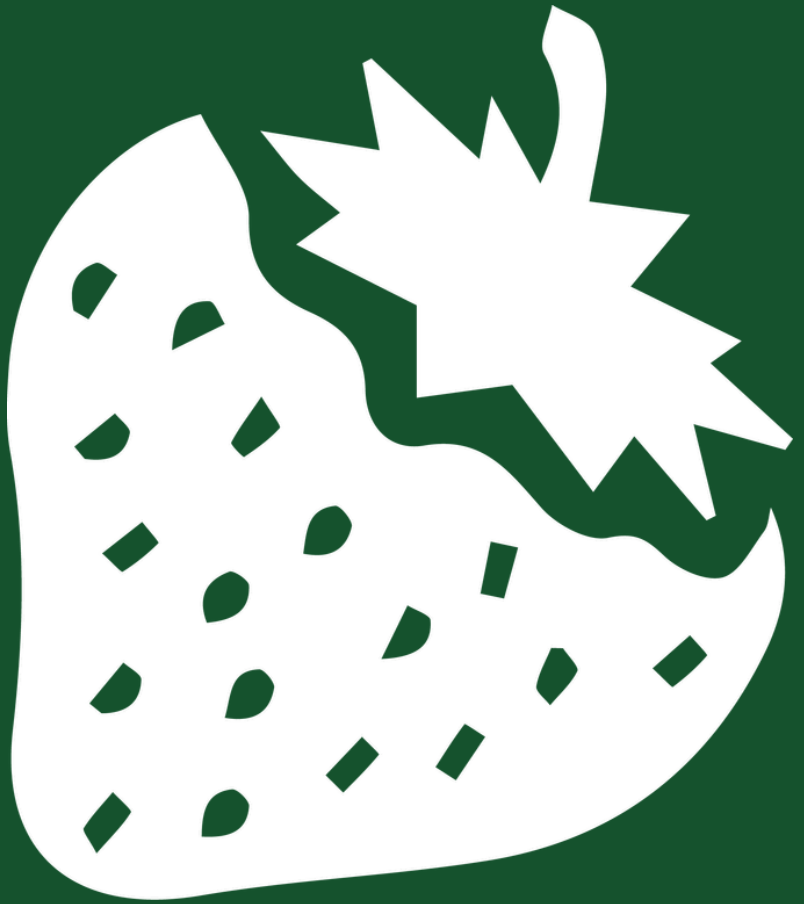
# AND FINALLY...

A single strawberry can have roughly **200 achenes** on its surface.

Each one can influence how the fruit develops.

Poor pollination of those individual achenes can lead to smaller or misshapen berries.

So when it comes to strawberries,  
**around 200 tiny details** can stand between a **flower and a premium pack-out.**



Connect with us!

