

# PICK YOUR OWN FRUIT PRODUCTION AT PENLANLAS

**CALU  
DEMO FARM  
FACTSHEET**  
September 2009



## INTRODUCTION

This factsheet provides an overview of the CALU workshop held at Penlanlas Farm near Aberystwyth on 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2009. The mixed farm grows fruit and vegetables for its thriving pick your own (PYO) business and farm shop. It also has a nine hole golf course and attractive café / club house on site.

The farm is situated four miles south east of Aberystwyth. The site is approximately 160m above sea level and is classified as primarily grade 4 clay loam soil. Until 1980, the 73 hectare farm was primarily a beef and sheep enterprise. The first fruit planted was 0.4ha of strawberries in 1980.

## CROPS GROWN ON SITE

For the PYO business the farm grows strawberries, blueberries, fruit trees, jostaberries, raspberries, blackcurrants rhubarb, blackberries and gooseberries.

## STRAWBERRIES - FIELD GROWN

The main variety of field grown strawberry is Symphony. Symphony will yield around eight tonnes per ha in a good year. However, it can take a year for newly planted strawberries to become established.

The plants are grown on a matted row system, which is where the plants are initially planted in rows but then allowed to grow together within beds.

Weeds are a problem for the site particularly nettles, thistles, rosebay willow herb, buttercups, and grasses, these require chemical weed control. This is part of a year round plan for the whole site.

## STRAWBERRIES UNDER PROTECTION

To begin protective cropping, two polytunnels were constructed and a table top system installed. The strawberry variety grown in the tunnels at Penlanlas is Elsanta.

In February the troughs are filled with compost and planted with new plug plants, these are guaranteed to fruit 60 days later. The table top system has the advantages that picking the fruit is easier than in the field and the protective cover means picking can also take place during poor weather. The strawberry plants are fed with a liquid feed through a Dosatron system.

Producing strawberries in polytunnels can yield around 30 tonnes of strawberries per ha.

## BLUEBERRIES

Two years ago 15 blueberry bushes were established at Penlanlas. They were planted in 20 litre pots in a polytunnel. The two varieties grown are Chandler and Blue Crop. Chandler produces larger fruit and is, so far, proving more productive. The plants are pruned in late February or early March.

Blueberries have very relatively low nutrient requirements and so only require a weak feed every four-five days. So far the blueberries are free from pest and disease issues.

## FRUIT TREES

The site has a small mixed traditional variety orchard that was established two years ago as part of a Tir Gofal agreement.

The fruit trees were planted at a wide spacing to allow easy access for pruning, maintenance and picking. The loam soil is not ideal for the trees, however they have established well. The trees have been mulched with old strawberry bed material.



Cronfa Amaethyddol Ewrop ar gyfer Datblygu  
Gwledig; Ewrop yn Buddsoddi  
mewn Ardaloedd Gwledig  
The European Agricultural Fund for  
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## **JOSTABERRY**

In the main outdoor fruit field there is a short row of jostaberries. The fruit looks just like a gooseberry until they turn nearly black when ripe. As a hybrid, jostaberries have proved to be resistant to a wide range of diseases including powdery mildew, fungal dieback, currant bud mite, and white pine blister. To manage the weeds the plants have been planted through a woven plastic sheet.

## **RASPBERRIES**

Two 50m polytunnels are used for raspberry production. The main variety grown is the heavy cropping Glen Ample which fruits in July. Raspberry canes planted in the field never really thrived at Penlanlas. Therefore, the decision was taken to plant the main raspberries for production in pots.

The raspberries are planted under Spanish tunnels in tall 10litre pots with around 10 fruiting canes / metre. The establishment costs for growing under Spanish tunnels is a lot more than it would be for canes in an outside plot. However, the yield can be double that of field grown crops. The tunnels are un-skinned in winter and re-covered in March.

## **BLACKCURRANTS**

There are two rows of blackcurrants at Penlanlas, they are a mix of the high yielding varieties Ben Lomond and Ben Sarek. The main market for the blackcurrants is for jams and jellies. During the winter months any weeds that have grown in the area around the bushes are cleared with Roundup (active ingredient glyphosate) as part of the site weed control programme.

## **RHUBARB**

There is a bed of around 15 rhubarb crowns established in the corner of the fruit field. The variety is Timperly Early. This is a popular early variety with long pink steams. The rhubarb crown will be dug up and divided every five or six years to ensure a healthy vigorous crop. Rhubarb is very disease resistant and so is a good crop for new growers.

## **BLACKBERRIES**

The blackberry variety Loch Maree was chosen because it is a thornless variety. The plants are established three meters apart and tied into a wooden support frame. Rabbits have been a problem as they like to eat the young shoots.

## **GOOSEBERRIES**

Penlanlas grows Invicta gooseberries. This is a high yielding variety, averaging yields around 10 tonnes per ha (provided there is no frost damage). The bushes are established on a 10cm 'leg'. This gives clearance under the bush and raises the fruit off the ground for easier picking and plant care. Invicta is not a mildew resistant variety and so requires spraying against mildew once the plant is green.

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