

Production of Dwarf Bilberry for Outplanting - Ottawa National Forest

2006 Accomplishments

This project was begun in 2005, with location and collection of dwarf bilberry fruits. In winter 2006, the seeds were planted in jiffy pellets, plug containers, and flats at the J.W. Toumey Nursery in Watersmeet, Michigan. The objective is to develop seedlings for outplanting on suitable sites to help in recovery of this Regional Forester's Sensitive/State threatened species and its dependent Sensitive/State threatened butterfly, the northern blue.

Germination was best in the jiffy pellets. Seeds planted in the flats mostly did not survive. These included seeds from the Chequamegon-Nicolet and Hiawatha National Forests. Surviving seed is entirely from the Ottawa NF or nearby private land. Seedlings were raised in a greenhouse, and later moved to a shade house. Nursery personnel sowed, watered, and transplanted seedlings as well as conducting trials with varying the soil pH and applying fertilizers. A slow-release triple 17 fertilizer was found to be the most effective.

The bilberry plants are slow growing, and are 2-3 inches tall at the end of their first season. The 700+ plants will be raised at Toumey Nursery at least one more growing season to grow larger and more robust before outplanting.

Bilberry stem cuttings were also collected in 2005, but none of these survived. This trial adds to knowledge of how to propagate these small northern shrubs.



*Sowing
bilberry seeds
at Toumey
Nursery in
February*



*Left: Bilberry plant
after transplanting
into plug container
Below left: Fertilizer
test plants in June
Below right: Bilberry
plant in pot, early
August*



Year Awarded: 2005
Project completion: 2007-2008
Report number: 2 of 3
2006 Expenditures: \$0

Other Funding: \$2,000 in-kind from
Toumey Nursery

Partners/Contractors/Cooperators:
J.W. Toumey Nursery, Michigan DNR,
Hiawatha and Chequamegon-Nicolet
National Forests.

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