Oil Sands Vegetation Cooperative

In This Issue:

2016 Targets

NAOS

This division has selected Paragon as the new harvest contractor for 2016

30 L Saskatoon
30 L buffaloberry
32 L dogwood
13 L aspen
20 L bog birch
10 L bog cranberry
35 L green alder
40 L river alder
35 L paper birch
15 L currants
20 L shrubby cinquefoil
5 L Labrador tea
45 L lowbush cranberry
10 L dwarf blueberry
20 L tamarack
2 L golden sand heather

COLK

50 L aspen
500 L jack pine
400 L tamarack
200 L balsam poplar
40 L buffaloberry

SAOS

To be determined

Species of Interest

In an internal survey, dwarf blue berry, or *Vaccinium myrtilloides,* was ranked by members of the OSVC as a priority species. It is an indicator of B type ecosites. Edible fruit make it valuable to First Nations stakeholders and other end-land users. It is typical on course-grained upland sites particularly under jack pine. Seeds do not require stratification prior to germination and greenhouse production of seedlings is quite reliable. Unfortunately transplantation has not always been successful. In a study conducted under CEMA, Wild Rose Consulting, Inc. found that although seedlings may die back after planting, many sprout from roots in subsequent years. Further work to improve the quality of nursery stock and/or identify ideal reclamation conditions would greatly improve the overall success of this species in revegetation.

New blueberry shoots from planted stock. Shoots died back following out-planting but growth resumed from roots the following year.

2016 Harvest Partners

NAOS: Canadian Natural Resources Ltd., Imperial Oil Ltd., Shell Albian Sands, Suncor Energy, Syncrude Canada Ltd.

SAOS: To be determined.

COLK: Canadian Natural Resources Ltd., Imperial Oil Ltd., Suncor Energy

New Publication

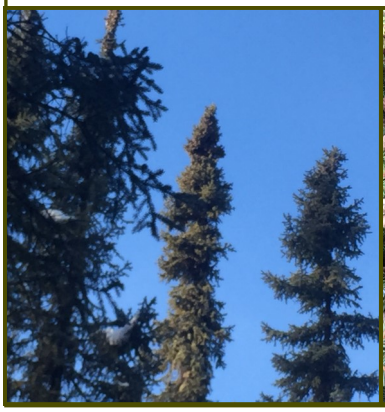
Smreciu, A. & K. Gould. 2015. Field emergence of native boreal forest species on reclaimed sites in northeastern Alberta. Native Plants Journal 16:204-226. Available at npjuwpress.org.

The database of banked seed among OSVC members was updated in February. Members wishing to access the database please contact kim.wildrose@shaw.ca

HARVEST NOTES

Tojoluma – Harvesting Black Spruce

Boreal Horticultural Services subcontracted Tojoluma Resources Inc. to harvest black spruce seed in November 2015 for the Cold Lake Division of the OSVC. This company has perfected a method to isolate cones by selectively harvesting trees, removing the tops, and transporting them to a separation facility. According to Erik Bergvinson of Tojoluma, *"The cone bearing branches get thrashed in a drum first then dropped on the cleaning table. It's a lot easier and faster than picking [cones] by hand."* The corrugated surface of the cleaning table removes excessive twigs and needles.



Berry Rakes or Berry Combs

Although berry rakes are used in fruticulture to harvest small berries, they have not been used extensively for wild harvest in Alberta. A berry rake consists of a handle , a rake-like set of tines with an open or enclosed catchment well (see photos). The rake is skimmed through the bush and ripe berries are scooped into the well. There are many different types commercially available and are made from various materials such as aluminum, wood or plastic. The berry rake can be used to harvest many species but is best utilized with firm fruit such as blueberries and lingonberries rather than soft fruit such as raspberries. Use of the rake introduces more debris into the collection than hand-picking but this consists generally of leaves with a few small twigs, which can be floated off relatively easily. There is a bit of a learning curve for each new type of fruit harvested – it is important to spend some time perfecting the method so as to not damage the mother plant. For our purposes, it could be used with: lingonberries, bearberries, blueberries currants, gooseberries, low bush cranberries, Saskatoons, and perhaps buffaloberries.

At the publication of this newsletter (May 31, 2016) the Fort McMurray wildfire has (at least temporarily) decimated many of the historic NAOS seed harvest sites. It has also limited SAOS involvement in early 2016 harvest. In the next issue we will provide information on the 2016 harvest and discuss the effects of wild fire on seed production, propagation and boreal succession.