

# ***THE OLDS COLLEGE DEMONSTRATION FRUIT ORCHARD***

## **Introduction**

The Olds College School of Horticulture and Geospatial Technology, with funding from the Alberta Professional Horticulture Growers Congress and Foundation Society and generous donations from members of the Alberta Farm Fresh Producers Association, will be establishing a demonstration fruit orchard on campus in 2009. The establishment of a small fruit orchard containing different species/cultivars of fruit and nuts for teaching and research will contribute substantially to the education of horticulture students, industry professionals and the general public. The orchard will showcase fruit species and cultivars viable for production on the Prairies. The disciplines of plant propagation, production, and management as well as fruit processing and food safety will gain from access to a working orchard. Heritage and unique varieties will be preserved in select plantings. Students, industry, and the general public will benefit from the establishment of a Prairie fruit orchard.

## **Benefit to the School of Horticulture and Geospatial Technology:**

The students of HORT 205 Prairie Fruit Production will be the primary users of the orchard. Other courses to benefit from the orchard include: HORT 106 Plant Materials, HORT 130 Pruning Practices, HORT 141 Introduction to Production Horticulture, HORT 244 Nursery Management, and PLNT 167 Plant Propagation. A producing orchard will offer students the opportunity to test their skills in propagation, maintenance, pruning and pest management. The orchard will also provide a living laboratory for industry and community continuing education in prairie fruit production.

**Future Activities:** This project will continue planting more U of Sask. fruit crop material spring 2009 and again in 2010.

Thank you to **MRAC, PFGA** for project funding and **CMCDC Portage la Prairie Station, MAFRI, Univ. of Sask.** for in-kind support.

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## **Benefit to Olds College:**

This resource furthers the College's goal to be a Centre of Excellence in Horticulture, increasing brand recognition and enhancing student recruitment. The orchard will serve as a point of interest in the Botanic Garden and can be utilized to establish a Harvest Festival to attract community members, prospective students and horticultural enthusiasts to Olds College.

## **Benefit to Industry:**

In addition to providing hands-on training to Olds College learners, the orchard may also be utilized by the Alberta Farm Fresh Producer's Association, and Landscape Alberta Nursery Trades Association for field training of association members, in collaboration with Olds College and for variety testing. The establishment of this orchard will directly benefit the industry and industry associations by providing well-trained students who will satisfy the employment gaps in the horticulture industry and establish themselves as leaders in their respective communities across the country.

### **Orchard Design:**

The orchard will consist of up to 20 rows and cover an area of approximately 0.25ha. Drip and standing set irrigation will be supplied to the site. The orchard will initially contain ten (10) plants of each of the following thirty-two (32) species/cultivars:

Black Currant (x 3 cultivars)

Pear

Chokecherry

Plum

Haskap

Raspberry (x 2 cultivars)

High Bush Cranberry

Saskatoon Berry (x 3 cultivars)

Lingonberry

Sea Buckthorn

Mongolian Cherry

Silver Buffaloberry

Mulberry Sour Cherry (x 6 cultivars)

Nanking Cherry Strawberry (x 2 cultivars)

Plant composition can and will change as dictated by industry needs/recommendations. The new demonstration orchard will augment and supplement pre-existing apple and grape plantings.

All plant species will be established and maintained according to industry standards with new or showcase methods and technologies installed on a rotating basis. The orchard is to serve as an example of Prairie fruit production for students, industry and the general public.

For more information please contact the Project Leader:

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