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## FRUIT RESEARCH PROGRAM AT OVERTON: AN OVERVIEW

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The acreage in fruit production in East Texas has been on the increase over the last several years. It is currently estimated that there are around 7,000 acres of peaches and 650 acres of blueberries. The planting of peaches has leveled off whereas the planting of blueberries has been increasing at a rate of 200 acres per year.

Rabbiteye blueberries are one of the youngest of all domestic fruit crops in production. They have only been grown commercially for 40 years. The oldest commercial planting of blueberries in Texas is less than 20 years old. This is in contrast to peaches which have been domesticated for many thousands of years. Production know how and cultivar development of rabbiteye blueberries is very limited, especially for the East Texas area. For this reason, the major emphasis of the fruit research program at Overton is in blueberries.

Other fruit crops, such as raspberries, Asian pears, strawberries and grapes could also have commercial potential. Another part of the fruit research program is the testing of new cultivars, species and production systems for a multitude of new and old fruit crops that may be economically viable for East Texas.

Outlined below is an overview for fruit research currently being conducted. Many of the results from this research are documented in this publication:

## Blueberries:

- New cultivar development and testing
- Propagation and nursery management
- Irrigation management
- Soil fertility and plant nutrition
- Production systems
- Developmental physiology
- Harvesting and handling

## Peaches:

- New cultivar development and testing
- Chemical thinning
- Soil fertility and plant nutrition

Other fruit crops:

Strawberries - production systems for annual plantings

Apples, Asian pears, raspberries, plums, table grapes,

blackberries - cultivar testings

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