



Specialty Niche Crop Profiles

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UC Cooperative Extension –Fresno

UC Davis Small Farm Program



...e seeing today's small farms earn
...than even he predicted 25 years
...Here are the high points of an
...blished interview three years ago
...George DeVault, editor of his

George DeVault

What's the difference between big
...and small farms?
...On the way

By Dennis McClintic

\$100,000 FROM 2 ACRES!

These partners maximize income by growing
...nts they can package and sell as exotic, ready-to-eat sala

...s partners in
...ve, B.C., are
...what high-
...op production
...out by growing
...marketing unu-
...tures to upscale



When cleaning and grading are complete, Susan Davidson mixes exotic salads for sale to restaurants.

...redients we mix
...e up many a meal
...o," says Herb Bar-
...artner who handles
...or the group's Glori-
...h and Seasonal Salad
...We learned quickly
...ave to continually find
...add value to the spe-
...ants we grow to make
...t money from a tiny land
...And we can't maximize
...e by growing the pedes-
...assortment of greens that
...land on a salad plate."
...together with Susan David-
...McCandless, Heather
...for stock-

...contain 30 ingredients coming
...from such plants as chickweed,
...purslane, lamb's-quarters, dill,
...garlic chives, spearmint, scotch
...kale, shingiku, radicchio, and
...bachelor's button, to name a few.
...company has its own re-

The compan
100 blossom
containers w
"We encour
their waiting
each flower
sprinkle the
it is garnishin
"We also ac
flowers by pa
plucked from
eties. Chefs u
to float in sou
ranging from
The partne
cialty vegeta
such orienta
zuna, green
mustards. Ba

...his groundbreaking book was publish
...duce fresh
...widely avail
...joram, sweet
...Our goal is
...material that un-
...restaurant," to
...Candless. "We
...we need to re-
...stalks and lei

Al-
e In-
and
"The
we need to re-
stalks and lei

...spun philosophy:

"If you're too poor to buy blueberries."

"There is nothing for you if you live in a city. Sell that farm."



Booker T. Whatley

...Too many farmers in this coun
...time on the seat of a tractor. Tractor
...broken. Get off that tractor. Get y
...conditioned office where you can pla

"Farmers are hard-working. But
...they have to be hard pla

\$200,000 FROM HALF AN ACRE

Intensive production of
high-value salad
ingredients generates an
impressive gross
income on this tiny farm

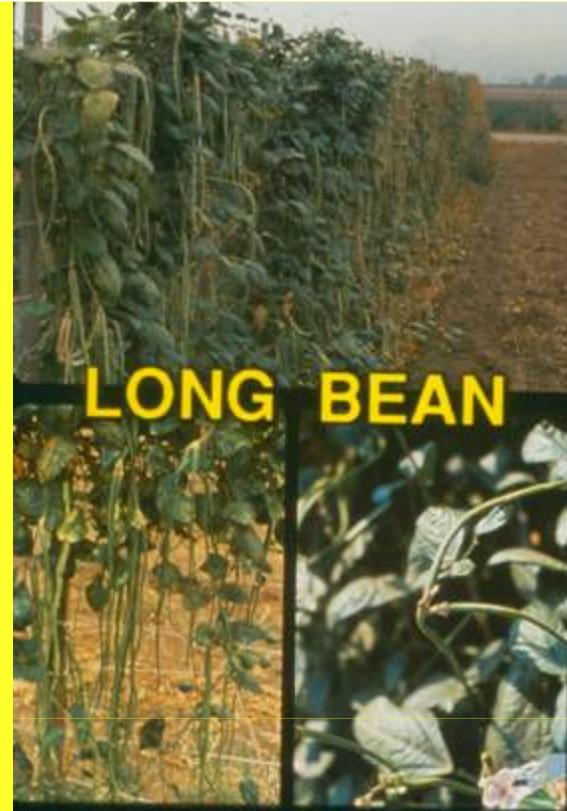
Kona Kai Farms grossed
nearly \$200,000 last
year from its half-acre
location in Berkeley,
Calif. Owner Michael
Norton believes that may
make it the most-profitable farm
per-acre in the United States.
Norton makes intensive use
of greenhouses, close spacing,
raised beds, and rich, heavily
composted soil to grow some 30
varieties of edible flowers, 30-
plus varieties of lettuce, an as-
sortment of other salad greens,
and several root crops including
carrots, radishes, and beets.
Super fresh. The produce is
picked and delivered within
hours to a number of restau-
rants in the San Francisco Bay
area, as well as to caterers and
small specialty markets.



10 Niche Crops



10 Niche Crops



10 Niche Crops



Where do I sell?

- 
1. Roadside stands
 2. Processor contracts
 3. Terminal markets
 4. Packing houses
 5. Specialty retail stores
 6. Farmers markets
 7. Restaurants
 8. CSA's
 9. Cooperatives
 10. Internet
 11. Agri-tourism
 12. Institutional

Markets	Difficulty getting into	Potential for returns
1. Roadside stands	☹	😊😊
2. Pick-your-own	☹☹	😊😊
3. Processor contracts	☹☹☹	😊
4. Terminal wholesale markets	☹☹	😊
5. Local vegetable packing houses	☹☹☹	😊
6. Specialty wholesale houses	☹☹☹☹	😊😊 to 😊😊😊😊
7. Specialty retail stores	☹☹ to ☹☹☹☹☹	😊😊 to 😊😊😊😊
8. Certified farmers markets	☹☹ to ☹☹☹☹☹	😊 to 😊😊😊😊😊
9. Flea markets/ swap meets	☹	😊😊
10. Restaurants	☹☹☹☹☹	😊😊😊 to 😊😊😊😊
11. CSA's (commun supp agric)	☹☹	😊😊
12. Internet	☹	😊 to ?
13. Cooperatives	n/a	😊😊
14. Agri-Tourism	☹ to ☹☹☹	😊😊
15. Institutional (school lunch) etc	☹☹☹☹☹	😊😊 to 😊😊😊😊



3 important points

- 1. Research the production of the crop**
- 2. Research market potential & places**
- 3. Diversify your farm**



- ✓ If everyone is growing it, it's not Niche
- ✓ Many Niche eventually become mainstream

Check out archives of Market News

www.ams.usda.gov/marketnews.htm

http://www.ams.usda.gov/fvarchive/los angeles wholesale/los angeles 2004/20040701hcw.pdf - Microsoft Internet Explorer

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Address http://www.ams.usda.gov/fvarchive/los%20angeles%20wholesale/los%20angeles%202004/20040701hcw.pdf Go

121% Go to Next View

LOS ANGELES WHOLESALE Fruit and Vegetable Report

USDA United States Department of Agriculture
Agricultural Marketing Service
Fruit and Vegetable Programs
Market News Branch

2202 Monterey St. Suite 104-F
Fresno, CA 93721
Phone: 559-487-5178 FAX: 487-5199
Website: www.ams.usda.gov/marketnews.htm

Thursday, July 01, 2004

Federal Market News
1320 East Olympic Blvd., Ste. 212
Los Angeles, CA 90021-1907
Phone: 213-894-3077
FAX: 213-894-2898

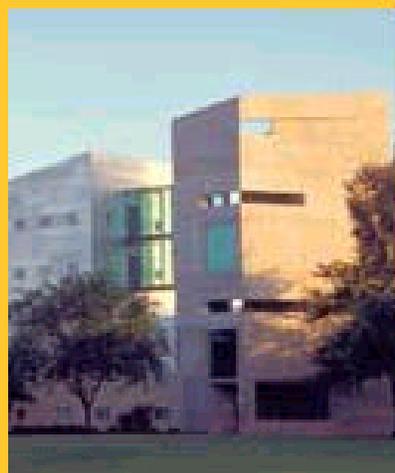
Volume XC – Number 126 For subscription information, please Call (800) 487-8796 Thursday, July 01, 2004

Unless otherwise stated prices below cover sales by first receivers of available supplies to 10:30 a.m. on this morning's wholesale terminal market. Sales are made from wholesale lots of stock of generally good merchantable quality and condition unless otherwise stated. Weather at 7:00 a.m.: Cloudy 64 Yesterday's Maximum 75

CITRUS FRUIT	BERRIES	
CLEMENTINES: OFFERINGS VERY LIGHT. 2.3 kg containers SF BOAT 24s 5.50-	BLUEBERRIES: MARKET ABOUT STEADY. flats 12 1-pt cups with lids CA	4.00-6.00 mostly 4.00-5.00 12s 3.00-5.00 mostly 4.00 occas higher/lower 15s 3.00-5.00 mostly 3.00-4.00 occas higher 18s insufficient offerings to quote
		HONEYDEWS: MARKET ABOUT

Done Internet

Start http://www.ams.usda... 8:43 PM



ARE Home

Department

Outreach

Undergraduate

Graduate

Department of Agricultural and Resource Cost and Return Studies

>> Outreach >>

The following is a list of the latest cost and return studies. **To view click here.** Click the commodity name to view the study. You may sort by clicking on any column heading. When the arrow is facing up, sorted in ascending order, and when the arrow is pointing down, sorted in descending order.

[printable version](#)

Current Cost and Return Studies

Jujube or Chinese Date

Scientific name: *Zizyphus jujube* Lam.

Family: Ramnaceae (Buckthorn family)

Origin: China

- Fresh
- Dried
- Candied
- Substitute for raisins or dates
- Smoked jujube
- Substitute for apples in pies
- Jujube turkey stuffing
- Medicinal tea for a sore throat

jujube graham bread, cake,
mincemeat and jujube sweet
pickles (USDA Chico)



Harvest / marketing:



- Mahogany-colored spots as fruits mature
- Eventually turn completely brown
- Can be eaten fresh or dried (Chinese date)
- Harvest may extend over 3-4 weeks or more (60-100 lb/tree)
- Fruit flavor is reminiscent of a dry apple
- **Wholesale prices in 2003 were \$1.50 per pound, dropping to .60 cents later in the season. Retail prices at farmers markets in S.F. \$6.00/lb**

Varieties: over 400 varieties

- **LI** - Large rounded fruit 1 1/2 inch long x 1 inch in diameter, and up to 3 ounces. Best eaten fresh, ripens Aug.
- **Lang** – Largest of the fruit, pear shaped. Fruit is red when ripe. Best when dried and made into jujube butter. Can be substitute for apples in pies. Tree is extremely productive. Fewer spines
- **Sherwood** - Very dense and sweet barrel shaped fruit. Tree is narrow and upright, weeping in habit.
- **GA 866** from Chico ??????
- 2004 prices – \$18.00/tree (hundred lot, 5/8" caliper)
- 0 – 120 degrees, 15 x 15 feet planting

If:



60 lbs/tree, 200 trees/acre, \$1.00/lb == **\$12,000 gross**

But

- **not all trees produce 60 lbs**
- **price drops as season progresses, to \$.60**
- **Sunburn and other problems reduce yields**
- Postharvest: <http://postharvest.ucdavis.edu/producefacts.shtml>

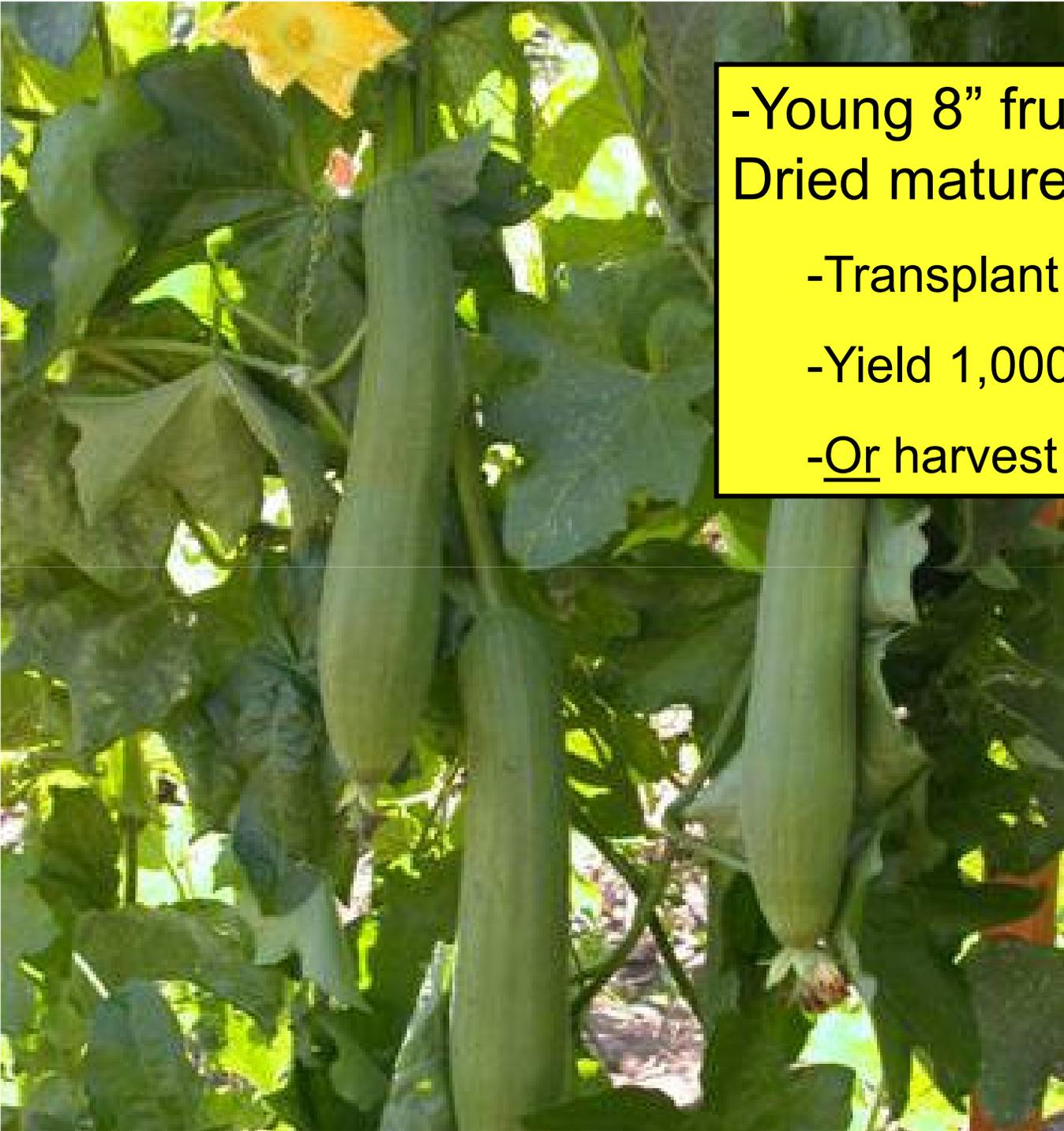
Asian Cucurbits

Luffa



Other Asian cucurbits





-Young 8" fruits like squash -
Dried mature luffa sponges

-Transplant in spring

-Yield 1,000 30-lb cartons/A

-Or harvest mature fruits

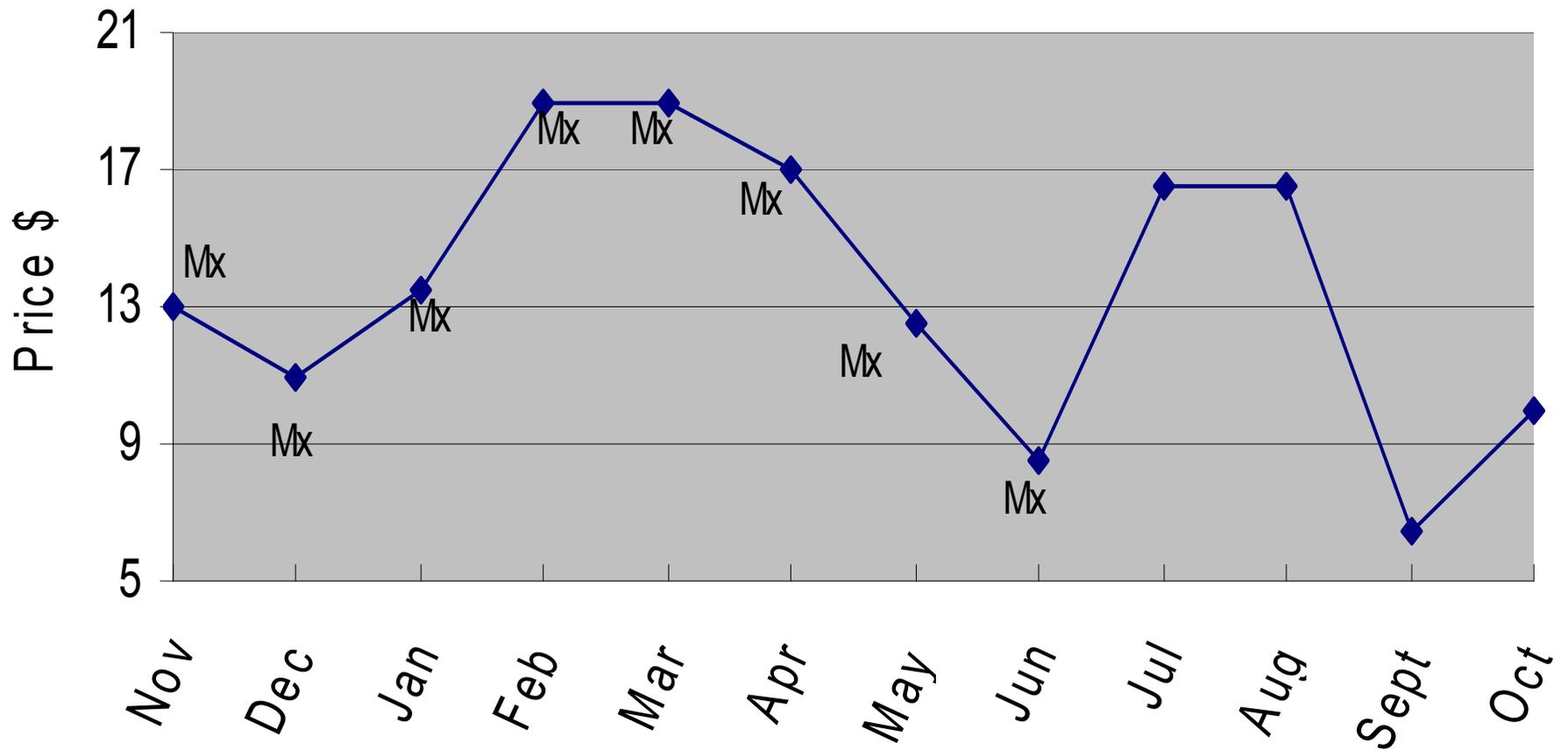




UC Cooperative Extension
Table 3. Cost Per Acre to Produce Bittermelon
San Joaquin Valley 2005

• Total Cultural Costs	4,355
• Total Harvest Costs	<u>7,879</u>
• Total Operating Costs	12,478
• Total Cash Overhead	381
• Total Cash Costs per acre	\$12,860

L.A. Wholesale Market Prices Sinqua 30 lb Cartons Nov 2004-Oct 2005



Value-added luffa

yield 20,000 fruits/acre

sell for \$10.00 each for 8-10" internet

= = _____ ??



Daikon



Baby daikon

Daikon w/ tops on

Daikom w/ tops off



DAIKON

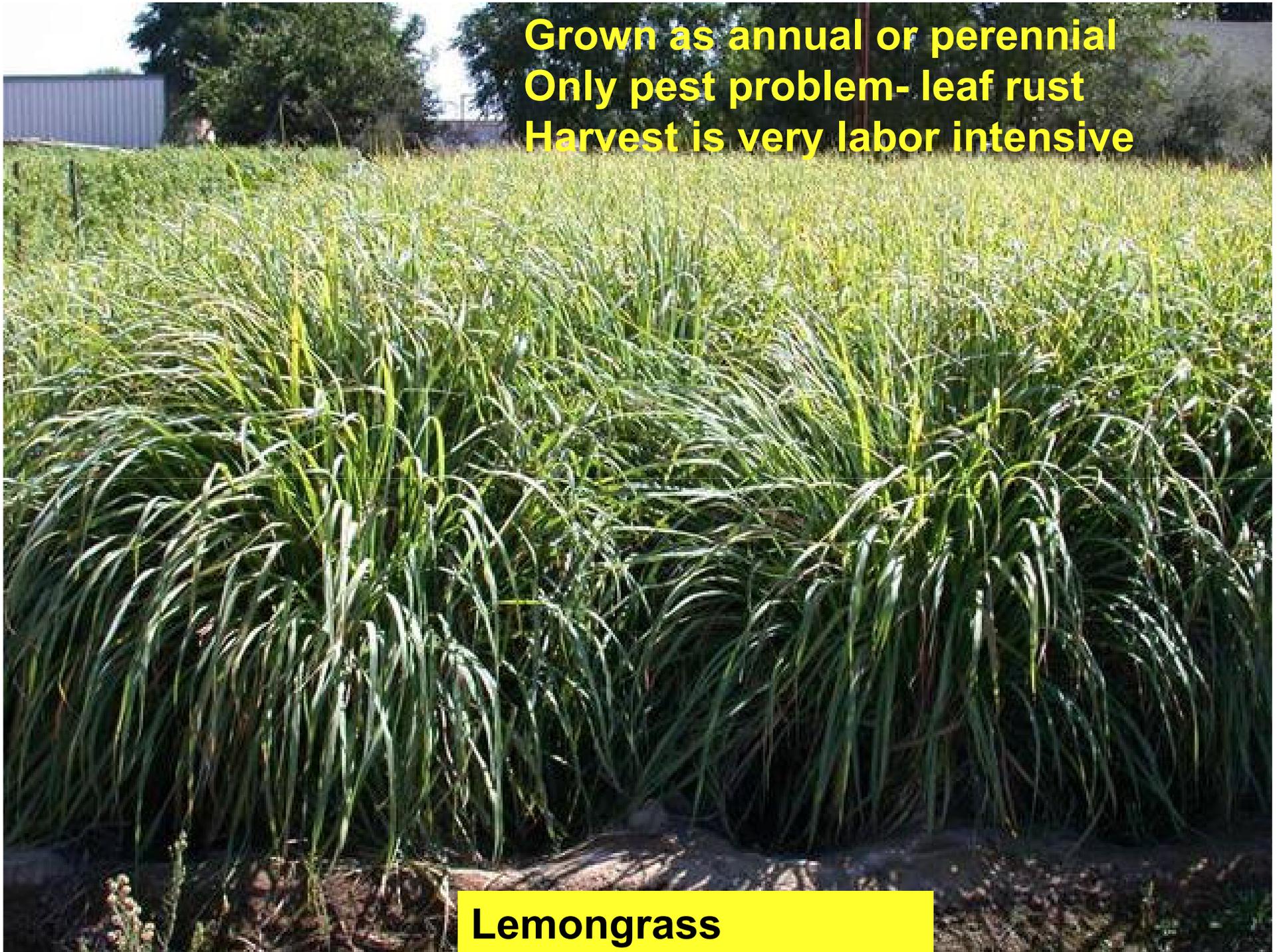
UC Cooperative Extension
 Net returns per acre above total costs
Daikon

\$ / box	Yield 450	550	650	750
4.00	-588	-518	-433	-357
6.00	312	582	867	1,143
8.00	1,212	1,682	2,167	2,643
10.00	2,112	2,451	3,467	4,413

Prices paid March-July at LA terminal market = \$\$ 9-12/ carton

((7-10)) at local packing houses))

Grown as annual or perennial
Only pest problem- leaf rust
Harvest is very labor intensive



Lemongrass



Uses:

Fresh

Dried

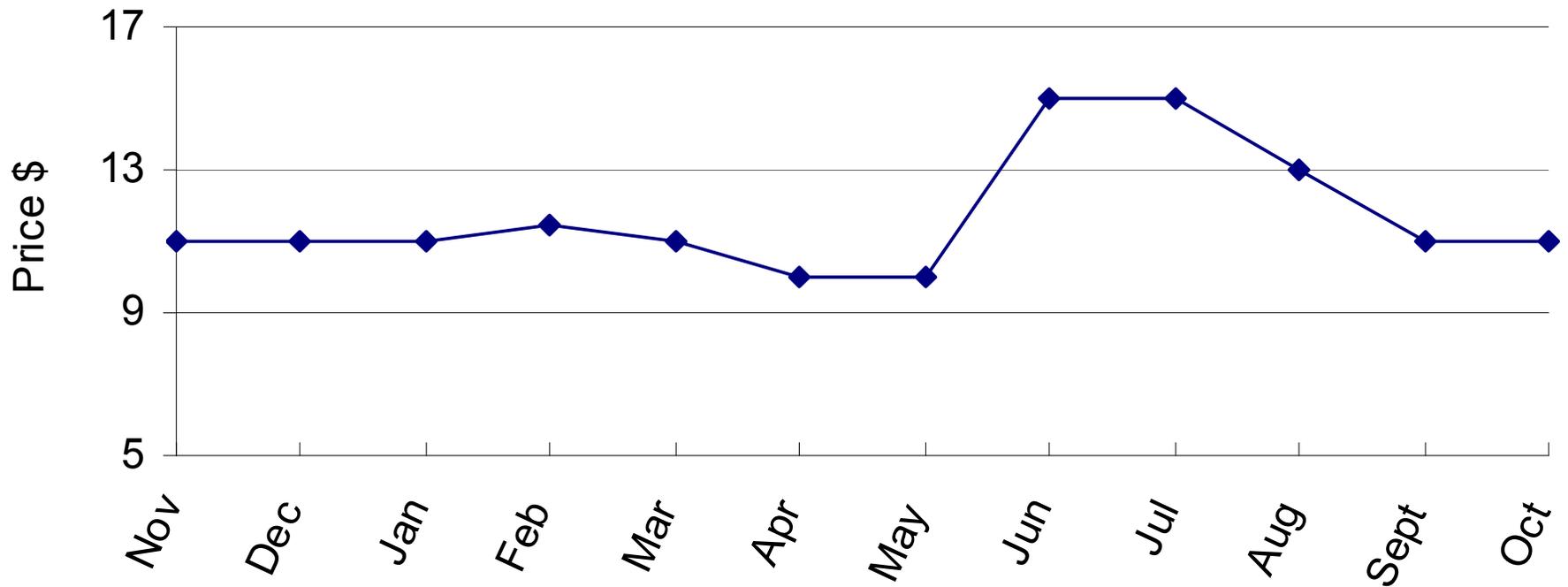
As a tea

(w/ mint)

Ornamental

Mosquito

L.A. Wholesale Market Prices
Lemongrass 40-lb carton
Nov 2004-Oct 2005





Specialty Eggplants
Chinese, Japanese, Thai,
Hmong, Filipino, bunching, bitter

Breakeven price = \$7.00 per box

(1,800 30-lb cartons per acre)



Main problems

- Lygus feeding causes flowers to shed
- Spider mites
- Aphids
- Caterpillars
- Nematodes
- Verticillium wilt (soil fungus)



UC Statewide IPM Project
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Blueberries - 2003 Taste Test

11 responses

- Sharpblue
- Bluecrisp
- Jewel
- Legacy
- Magnolia
- Misty
- Star
- Duplin
- Echota
- Jubilee
- Ozark Blue
- Sampson
- PowderBlue
- O'neal
- Biloxi
- Emerald
- Centurion
- Southmoon



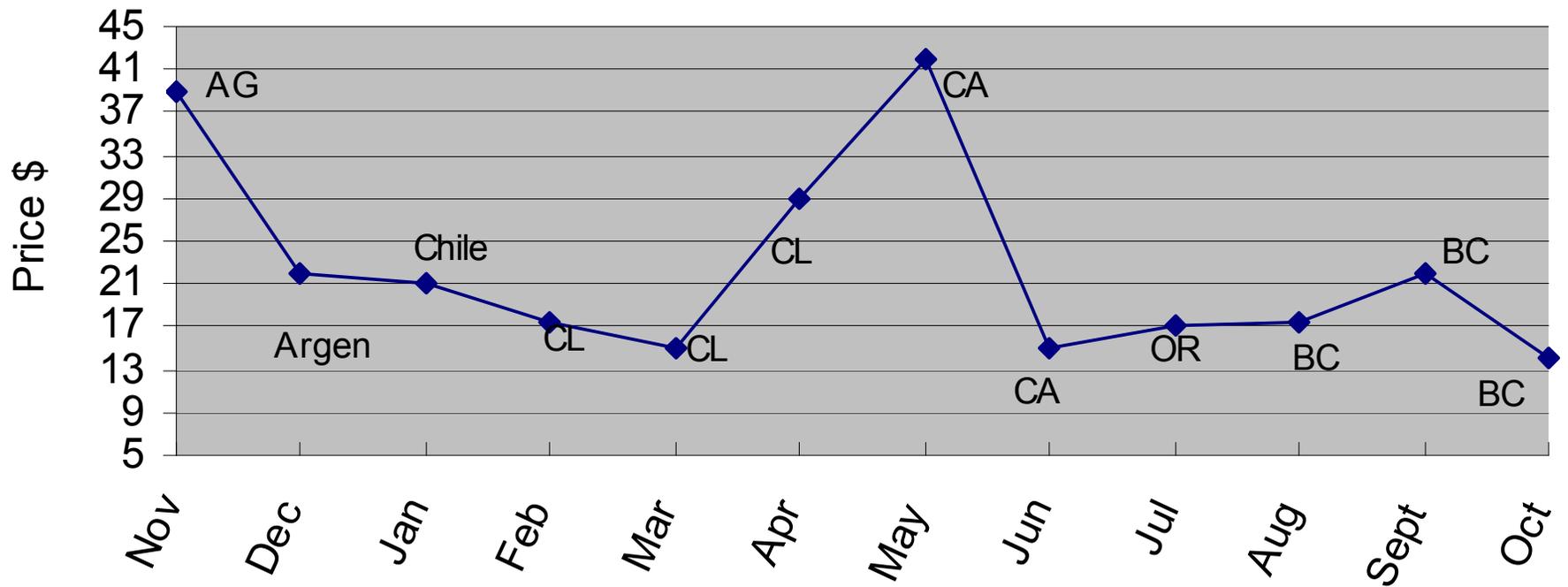
- * Very expensive to establish
 - * 3-4 years to start producing
- But – returns in the right market window = v good**

NET RETURNS PER ACRE ABOVE TOTAL COSTS OF PRODUCTION

Price \$/lb	Yield (lb/acre)						
	13,200	15,400	17,600	19,800	22,000	24,200	26,400
0.86	(4,058)	(3,863)	(3,667)	(3,471)	(3,276)	(3,080)	(2,884)
0.98	(2,474)	(2,015)	(1,555)	(1,095)	(636)	(176)	284
1.11	(758)	(13)	733	1,479	2,224	2,970	3,716
1.23	826	1,835	2,845	3,855	4,864	5,874	6,884
1.35	2,410	3,683	4,957	6,231	7,504	8,778	10,052
1.48	4,126	5,685	7,245	8,805	10,364	11,924	13,484
1.60	5,710	7,533	9,357	11,181	13,004	14,828	16,652

Note: Numbers in parenthesis mean a net loss for the given price and yield combination.

L.A. Wholesale Market Prices
Blueberries 12, 4.4 oz cups
Nov 2004-Oct 2005



Capers

fresh

pickled



Recommend the spineless type – labor intensive

Plantings live 10-20 years



Chinese Long Beans

Chinese Long Beans

Problems with pea aphids and bean mosaic spread by aphids

Total cost per acre to produce Chinese Long Beans

Cultural = 4,658

Harvest = 4,159

Overhead = 381

TOTAL = \$9,377

At 13,200 lbs/a, need a price of 75¢/lb to break even

Papaya

varietal testing 2 years to try to get a ripe fruit



Green papaya salad

- 2 ½ cups shredded, peeled green papaya
- 2 plum tomatoes
- 3 oz cooked baby shrimp

- ½ tsp finely chopped garlic
- 1 tsp finely chopped Thai chili peppers
- 2 tbl fish sauce
- 2 tbl lime juice
- 1 tsp chopped cilantro
- 1 tsp chopped Thai basil
- 1 tsp chopped mint
- 1 tsp sugar

Think outside the box



- Value added, processed
- Medicinal
- High lycopene tomatoes
- High carotene carrots
- Heirlooms
- Organic
- Antioxidant
- Ethnic



Think outside the box



- New trendy things
 - grape tomatoes
 - Mini watermelons
- Papayas – don't ripen? use for green papaya salads
- Printed apples



Other sources of information:

- UC Small Farm Center — www.sfc.ucdavis.edu
- Texas A&M Univ-
aggiehorticulture.tamu.edu/extension/fruit/jujube/jujube.html
- Calif. Rare Fruit Growers-www.crfg.org/pubs/ff/jujube.html
- Australia - www.users.bigpond.com/brookman/jujubesFactSht.htm
- UC Cooperative Extension in Fresno —
rhmolinar@ucdavis.edu

Maybe as simple as growing something in greenhouses out of season





Donqua – “Chinese Winter Melon”
High blood pressure