

Managing forests for multiple purposes

Spreading the berries beneath the boughs: bilberry & cowberry in timber production

The forest floor could offer opportunities for added income in timber production stands, without detracting from the main business. Berries spread naturally beneath the branches of wild forests; why not also in forest stands dedicated to wood production?



StarTree's revised guidelines for bilberry and cowberry detail how to optimise stand management for the joint production of timber and berries.

Market prices paid to berry pickers and berry-picking costs were used in calculations. This means the results are most relevant when the forest owner directly or indirectly benefits from managing the stands for both timber and berries.

Who benefits?

What's best for bilberry (*Myrtillus*)?

Pine:

- Even-aged forest management is most profitable on sites where bilberry yields are likely to be high.
- More frequent & heavier thinning and 20 years longer rotation are recommended.
- In sparse, mature pine stands, a longer rotation results in higher bilberry harvests.

Birch:

- May be as profitable as for pine but empirical knowledge is scarce.
- More frequent and heavier thinning and longer rotation also recommended.

Spruce:

- No gain by thinning more frequently and heavily.
- In uneven-aged management, the stand basal area would be constantly at a level that enables good bilberry yields, which is better than under the current, even-aged, management system.

Mixed stands:

- Spruces are mostly thinned out, leaving mainly a mixture of pine and birch, favourable for bilberry.
- Heavier thinning and longer rotation are recommended.

What's best for cowberry (*Vaccinium*)?

Pine:

- Treeless open habitats are most suitable.
- Cowberry yields increase a few years after regeneration cutting in pine stands.
- The highest cowberry yields happen at the beginning of the rotation; thinning in young stands would promote cowberry yields but this is not profitable for pine.
- Heavier thinning treatments at the end of the rotation are recommended for increased yields.
- Sparse mature pine stands are also suitable for cowberry: longer rotation lengths would maintain both cowberry production and forest cover.

Want to know more? [Read the whole report!](#)

