

## ***In vitro***

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### ***In vitro* pollen germination of different highbush blueberry cultivars grown in Western Serbia**

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#### **SUMMARY**

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- *In vitro* pollen germination test is one of the main indicators of pollen functional viability. This characteristic is in large extent the first indicator of the genotype adaptation to different geographical conditions.

The paper presents the results of *in vitro* pollen germination of highbush blueberry cultivars 'Reka', 'Nui', 'Duke', 'Ozarkblue' and 'Bluecrop' (control), grown in agro-ecological conditions of Western Serbia.

During the three-year study the highest pollen germination was recorded in cultivar 'Reka' (80.93%), and the lowest in cultivar 'Nui' (62.31%). Since the weather conditions can greatly affect the

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"", " ( ),

(80.93%),  
(62.31%).

(70.14%).

(Leposavi , 2014). Stösser et al. (1996)

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(Pirlak 2002, Cerovi et al., 2005, Mert, 2009). Pirlak (2002), *in vitro*

, Merrill (1936)

12%),

(1966),

( 10 20%)

(5,5%), "Weymouth" "Pemberton"

expression of these traits, the lowest pollen germination in all cultivars was recorded in the second year of the study (70.14%).

**Key words:** highbush blueberry, pollen, quality, germination test

## INTRODUCTION

The process of pollination and fertilization of highbush blueberries is largely dependent on pollen quality and storage conditions (Leposavi , 2014). Stösser et al. (1996) stated that the quality of pollen varies between cultivars within certain fruit species. Some authors indicated the phenomenon of variation of *in vitro* pollen germination in different fruit species per year, as well as different influence of the experimental conditions on this characteristic, especially temperature (Pirlak 2002; Cerovi et al., 2005; Mert, 2009).

According to Pirlak (2002), high *in vitro* pollen germination at different temperatures in various species and cultivars, from the standpoint of the regularity of certain phases of the fertilization process, may be the first indicator of suitability of the genotypes to different environmental conditions.

Studying pollen germination in several highbush blueberry cultivars, Merrill (1936) found that the increase of sucrose content in nutrient media (over 12%) proportionally increased germination of pollen grains.

In contrast, the results of the study of pollen germination in 6 blueberry cultivars conducted by Eaton (1966) showed that the increase of sucrose content in nutrient agar (from 10 to 20%) had no influence on the germination of pollen grains. The lowest pollen grain germination showed cultivar 'Weymouth' (5.5%), and the highest 'Pemberton' (70.6%). Wood and Barker (1964)

(70,6%). Wood and Barker (1964)	-	recorded the highest germination (35%) of pollen grains in the wild lowbush blueberry ( <i>Vaccinium angustifolium</i> Ait.) in nutrient medium that contained 0.5% agar and 13.5% sucrose.
-	(35%)	
<i>angustifolium</i> Ait.)	( <i>Vaccinium</i>	
0.5%	13.5%	
"	" ( <i>Vaccinium</i>	Pollen germination in rabbiteye blueberry ( <i>Vaccinium ashei</i> Reade) varied from 80.2 to 90.2% in the trials of Brevis et al. (2006). According to the results of Dogterom et al. (2000), pollen of cultivar 'Bluecrop' showed the highest germination comparing to 'Patriot' (93.2 and 88.8%, respectively).
<i>ashei</i> Reade)	80.2 90.2%	
(2000),	Brevis et al. (2006 .).	
"	Dogterom et al.	
" (	93,2 88,8%).	

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

The three-year study (2008–2010) was carried out in the experimental blueberry plantation established in the spring of 2006 in the locality a ak (43°53.654' north latitude and 20°20.619' east longitude, 245 m altitude, and north-south row orientation).

Three-year old certified plants were planted at a distance of 2.5 x 1.5 m. The inter-row space was layered with 10 cm of sawdust obtained from coniferous trees (Leposavi, 2014).

*In vitro* pollen germination test have been used to estimate pollen viability. Branches with flowers in the full bloom stage all of cultivars were used for the test. Anthers were kept in paper boxes at a temperature of 20 °C for 24-48 h, until the moment of rupture and the release of pollen grains. Pollen of each cultivar was inoculated into three Petri dishes on the nutrient medium (1% agar and 12% sucrose).

After 24 h of incubation on 20 °C the number of germinated pollen grains was evaluated in three fields of view under light microscope Olympus BX61 (Olympus, Tokyo, Japan). Microscope field of view included about 100 pollen grains. Pollen grains that germinated exceeding their radius were considered as germinating grains (Galleta, 1983). The share of germinated grains per year was evaluated as average number of

germinated pollen grains on nine different microscopic fields of view.

Obtained data were statistically analyzed using two factor (A - cultivar, B - year) analysis of variance (ANOVA) (ANOVA) (Hadživukovi , 1991).

The significance of differences among mean values in regard to standard cultivar 'Bluecrop' was determined by Dunnett test (Dunnett, 1955).

The significance of differences among mean values per year and interaction mean values of cultivars (pollination variant) x year was determined by Duncan multiple range test (Duncan, 1955).

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## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

*In vitro*

one of the main indicators of pollen functional viability. Factors affecting pollen germination are: fruit species, nutritional and health status of the plant, flower position on the plant, weather conditions, time and manner of pollen collection and storage, density of inoculated pollen on the nutrient medium, composition and pH value of the medium, etc. (Stanley and Linskens, 1974).

*in vitro*

Using *in vitro* germination test, only pollen grains that germinated on nutrient media exceeding their radius were considered as germinating grains

Analysis of variance of pollen germination showed significant differences between cultivars, year and different germination of cultivars per year (Table 1, Figure 1).

Significantly higher pollen germination in regard to control cultivar, mean value for three years, showed cultivar 'Reka'. On the contrary, the lowest pollen germination was recorded in cultivar 'Nui' (P<0,01).

Significantly higher pollen germination, regardless cultivar, was evidenced in the third year of the study. In general, lower germination in the second year is a consequence of the lower pollen

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" " " ", Cerovi et al. (2005). germination in cultivars 'Nui', 'Bluecrop' and 'Duke', as reported by Cerovi et al. (2005). The same authors stated the occurrence of variation of *in vitro* pollen germination in different fruit species per year.

1. in vitro (%)  
2008 2010

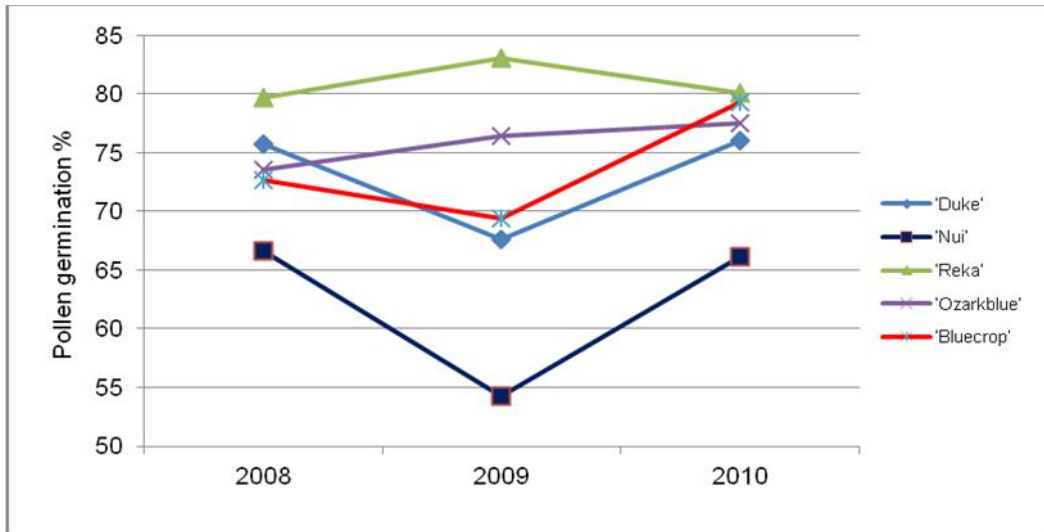
**Table 1. Pollen germination *in vitro* (%) of highbush blueberry cultivars, from 2008 to 2010**

/Treatment			
/Cultivar			
	'Duke'		73.13 ns
	'Nui'		62.31**
	'Reka'		80.93**
	'Ozarkblue'		75.87 ns
	'Bluecrop'		73.76
/Year	2008		73.65 a
	2009		70.14 b
	2010		75.81 a
	'Duke'	2008	75.76 a-d
		2009	67.61 de
		2010	76.02 a-d
	'Nui'	2008	66.60 e
		2009	54.22 f
		2010	66.11 e
	'Reka'	2008	79.68 ab
		2009	83.05 a
		2010	80.07 ab
	'Ozarkblue'	2008	73.60 b-e
		2009	76.45 a-d
		2010	77.55 abc
	'Bluecrop'	2008	72.63 b-e
		2009	69.35 c-e
		2010	79.30 ab
ANOVA			
Cultivar (A)/	( )		**
Year (B)/	( )		**
A × B			**

Asterisk represents significant differences between mean values of 'Bluecrop' (control) and other cultivars for  $P < 0.05$  (\*) and  $P < 0.01$  (\*\*) based on Dunnett test and the results of ANOVA (F test); ns – not significant. Means per rows for year and interaction mean A×B marked with the same lowercase letter represent that there are no differences for  $P < 0,01$  based on Duncan multiple range test.

Ns - P<0.05 (\*) P<0.01 (\*\*)

P <0,01 A B



1.  
 2008 . 2010 .  
**Fig. 1. Pollen germination of highbush blueberry cultivars, from 2008 to 2010**

"Pemberton" (70,6%),  
 Eaton (1966). Wood & Barker (1964)  
 (35%)  
 Brevis et al. (2006).  
 Dogterom et al. (2000)  
 (93,2%)

Cultivars 'Reka' and 'Ozarkblue' showed the same pollen germination during entire study. Cultivar 'Nui' showed the significantly lower pollen germination in regard to other cultivars during all years. Pirlak (2002) stated that this characteristic may indicate its lower adaptability to agricultural and ecological characteristics of the locality. This should be considered when selecting blueberry cultivars to plant.

Apart lower pollen germination of cultivar 'Nui', pollen germination of other cultivars is higher than the highest value of cultivar 'Pemberton' (70.6%), as reported by Eaton (1966). Wood & Barker (1964) recorded low pollen germination (35%) in highbush blueberry cultivars. Significantly higher values of this characteristic were reported by Brevis et al. (2006).

Dogterom et al. (2000) reported higher values (93.2%) of pollen germination for cultivar 'Bluecrop' than reported in our study.

## CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results of the three-year study of pomological characteristics of five highbush blueberry cultivars: 'Reka', 'Duke', 'Nui', 'Ozarkblue' and 'Bluecrop' we may conclude that *in vitro* pollen germination represents cultivar's characteristic. The highest value of pollen germination showed cultivar 'Reka' (80.93%), and the lowest cultivar 'Nui' (62.31%). These results may indicate low adaptability of the cultivar 'Nui' to agricultural and ecological characteristics of the locality where the experiment was established.

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