



COURTESY OF DAVID YARBOROUGH
Unripe blueberries are seen in Ellsworth last month.

Berry

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back-to-back bumper crops produced more than 100 million pounds of blueberries each year. And because 99 percent of Maine's wild blueberry crop is frozen and sold in grocery stores all year, supplies are far from dwindling.

"Right now we have an oversupply situation," Nancy McBrady, executive director of the Wild Blueberry Commission of Maine, said. A return to average crop size of 70 million to 80 million pounds

may actually help, she said.

With a late July and August harvest on the horizon, no one's crying the blues yet.

"The good news is we haven't had a lot of hot weather. No rain and hot weather is bad. In cool weather, plants seem to do OK because you don't see much stress on the plants," Yarrowborough said.

Though optimistic, between now and August, an even rain has to fall every week.

"I don't think we are in a crisis situation just yet," McBrady said, "but we still have a ways to go."



BDN FILE
A boat sits at its mooring off downtown Lubec in 2015.

Suicide

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fishermen and foresters also probably have more access to firearms. And my other guess is that we're dealing with factors related to isolation."

Among those factors is the way many parts of rural Maine are underserved, with respect to mental health care, she said, and the stigma about seeking help that still exists in many places.

"Suicide is a very striking and disturbing occurrence," Haigh said. "We still regard it as not common. But as researchers we want to be very aware of risk factors."

According to Marley, additional factors that likely play a role in the higher suicide rate among farmers, fishermen and those in the forestry industry include substance abuse and higher accident risks in those fields.

Agriculture, for instance, is one of the nation's most dangerous industries, with the injury rate in 2011 over 40 percent higher than the rate for all workers, according to the U.S. Department of Labor. The fatality rate for agricultural workers was seven times higher than the fatality rate for all workers in private industry.

"The other piece is the culture and the mindset of the

people involved in those industries," Marley said of farmers, fishermen, foresters — and construction workers, too. "They are people accustomed to using their bodies, accustomed to doing things and fixing things themselves. They don't easily reach out for help."

The Maine Suicide Prevention Program seeks to increase awareness about risk and the availability of help to more Mainers, especially to high risk populations working in what he called the male-dominated fields. But Marley said that can be an uphill battle, pointing out that some of the traits that Mainers pride themselves can be very unhelpful when a person is having a crisis.

"What is the culture of northern New England?" Marley asked. "Yankee, stoic, private, pulling ourselves up by our bootstraps. This is a piece it's hard to intervene on. It's a value that's closely held."

Intervening, however hard, can be critically important, he said.

"If you're worried about your spouse or your brother or your neighbor or your fellow Rotarian, do you reach out and say, 'hey, I'm concerned,'" Marley asked. "Or do you say that's their private business?"

For those who need help: call the Maine Suicide Prevention Program's toll-free crisis hotline at 800-568-1112.

To improve your soil, learn to read your weeds

BY BARBARA DAMROSCH
THE WASHINGTON POST

Last year, a section of our lawn was neglected, and it turned into a flower garden. Amid the tall, unmowed grass appeared bright spots of orange and yellow hawkweed, white daisies and blue violets. It was pretty, like the little flowery meads once planted in medieval cloisters to bring the outside world in. But it had been designed as a band of green to set off the real flower garden behind it.

This year, we set out to remove some of the non-grass species that had taken hold, but things were worse than we had thought. One part had almost no grass at all — just mats of sheep sorrel, hawkweed, plantain and dock.

Looking to see which weeds have moved into an area is useful because they often can tell you why they are there. Yes, I know, it's because we didn't weed, but also because any wild plant will choose to grow in the conditions that suit it best.

As we surveyed the lawn as a whole, it was clear the soil was quite acidic. The weedy interlopers grow in soil with a low pH, especially the sorrel and dock. (Other common acid-loving weeds include mulleins, buttercups and wild strawberries.) There were even some mossy patches — a dead giveaway. We had limed the soil when it was sown, but it had become more acidic over time. In his 1946 book "Weeds and What They Tell Us," Eh-



COURTESY OF HELEN HAMILTON | TNS
Some plants, such as these common blue violets, can indicate conditions in your soil.

renfried Pfeiffer emphasizes that weeds are often an indication of changes in the soil

Any wild plant will choose to grow in the conditions that suit it best

rather than its original composition.

In the area where the grass had utterly surrendered, I went to work with a digging fork to pry the weeds loose, but the ground was unexpectedly hard. Although most of the yard has sandy soil, there are patches of clay here and there, turned up in the course of leveling the garden. This was one of them. No wonder the plantain loved it — that weed is often found in hardened, trodden-on paths.

Simply liming the soil in

most of the lawn would improve it (in addition to more consistent mowing), but this bad area needed to be tilled and given lots of organic matter to aerate it and add fertility. In went a few wheelbarrow loads of weed-free manure and some peat moss, too, its acidity countered with extra garden lime.

It made me look around at the rest of the property to see what the weeds had to say. A large pile of blue marine clay we had stockpiled while digging our pond is covered with coltsfoot every spring, a pretty yellow flower that favors moist clay soil. Stinging nettles love our wet areas, and jewelweed thrives near the pond in part shade. White oxeye daisies pop up in every sunny spot where the soil is totally unimproved, showing how forgiving they are of poor land. Goldenrod is

almost ubiquitous, but that's only because there seems to be a goldenrod species for every condition — wet or dry, rich or poor.

The most consistent weed growth is always in the vegetable gardens, where most of our attention is focused. Cool-weather chickweed is always followed by the same warm-weather species: lamb's-quarters, pigweed, prickly lettuce, galinsoga, purslane — all the ones that adore the loose, crumbly, nitrogen-rich soil we bestow on the edible crops that sustain us. "Congratulations," these invaders announce. "You have given your tomatoes and spinach a wonderful place in which to grow. Now weed it."

Damrosch is the author of "The Four Season Farm Gardener's Cookbook"; her website is www.fourseasonfarm.com.

Vets

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of Habitat for Humanity York County, said.

On the construction site in early July, Holbrook wasn't the only one working hard.

At his side in the midday heat was a crew of veterans from the Army and Navy, eager to pitch in.

Brad Howard, a burly man wearing in a cap that said "Operation Iraqi Freedom," climbed down from a ladder to explain.

"All military is a brotherhood. It's like a fraternity. You always have a fellow veteran's back," Howard, an Army vet who served in Iraq shortly after Holbrook, said.

The Saco resident is also applying for a Habitat home.

"I wouldn't be putting in as much time [if the military connection wasn't so strong]," Howard said. Plus, like Holbrook, being outside socializing and learning new skills is a sanity break.

"It's more therapeutic for me," Howard said. "And there is no clock to punch."

The land for Holbrook's home was donated by the town. Pushed back from the road, shrouded by plants and trees, it's a perfect location for Holbrook, who suffers from anxiety.

"Being a combat veteran, having this kind of privacy is important," Holbrook said. "Being around crowds is stressful, so I try to avoid the stress as much as I can."

To Jack Rodie, the project leader who owns a construction company on Maine's southern coast, teaching



KATHLEEN PIERCE | BDN
Harry Lewis (right), who was active in the Navy for 22 years, works the blade saw helping build fellow veteran Waylon Holbrook's new home. Habitat for Humanity selected Holbrook as recipient of the new home built by volunteers.

volunteers to build homes is more than woodworking 101.

"Sure, we are building a house, but it's almost like building a community. It's something more than just a house," said Rodie, who places tools in the hands of anyone who shows up. "I'd much rather work with this group than the multimillion-dollar homes going up along the coast."

Even volunteers such as Brian Duffy, a jack-of-all-

trades from Ogunquit, without a military connection, offered a hand upon hearing a veteran was in need.

"It got me to act faster," Duffy, perspiring in the sun, said. "That's what you do. As soon as I heard a veteran needed help, it was a clear call to action."

Duffy, who turns up every week to help, minced few words on his reason for being there. "A veteran needs a home, by all means

let's get it done."

And soon, when Holbrook his wife and sons move into their new ranch, he can build a new foundation. Top on his list?

"To provide my family with a stable home and get involved in the local community," Holbrook said. "I'd like to re-integrate. It's important for me and my family to socialize, make friends and be part of this new environment."

'Secret Life of Pets' debuts to massive \$103.2M

BY BRENT LANG
REUTERS

LOS ANGELES — "The Secret Life of Pets" dominated the weekend box office, racking up a massive \$103.2 million and launching the first new franchise of the summer.

Its success is a feather in the cap for Illumination chief Chris Meledandri, confirming his status among the ranks of animation giants. The family film, which explores what dogs, cats and other animal companions do while their owners are busy at work, cost an economical \$75 million to produce, roughly half of what most studios spend making animated movies. Universal is backing the picture, which launched across 4,370 locations.

"Illumination just has a way of creating 'want to see' movies," said Nick Carpou, Universal's domestic distribution chief. "They make movies that resonate with audiences."

And ones that spawn toy lines. The cuddly creatures that populate "Pets" seem tailor-made to sell stuffed animals and T-shirts, creating a financial windfall for the studio. The film deftly exploited dog- and cat-obsessed moviegoers to appeal to both parents and children. In the United States alone, Americans are expected to spend more than \$62 billion in 2016 on their pets.

"Somebody at Illumination is popping the champagne and pouring out the Kibble," said Paul Dergarabedian, senior media analyst at comScore. "The love that people have for their fish, their bird, their dogs, or their hamsters is demonstrated by their insatiable appetite for a movie like this."

"The Secret Life of Pets" easily supplanted Disney and Pixar's "Finding Dory" from first place on the box office charts — a ranking it has held for the three previous weeks. The sequel to "Finding Nemo"

slid to second place with \$20.4 million, having made \$422.6 million to lap "Captain America: Civil War" as the highest-grossing film of the year on a domestic basis. It also ranks as the highest-grossing animated film in North America, unseating "Toy Story 3."

The weekend's other new release, Fox's "Mike and Dave Need Wedding Dates," opened to \$16.6 million at 2,982 sites for a fourth-place finish. The comedy about a pair of party animal brothers (Zac Efron and Adam DeVine) who enlist two women (Anna Kendrick and Aubrey Plaza) to accompany them to their sister's wedding, cost \$33 million to make. Chernin Entertainment produced the film. Its audience was nearly evenly split between the genders, with women making up 52 percent of ticket buyers.

"We were very opportunistic about this date," said Chris Aronson, Fox's domestic distribution chief. "This seemed

to be a good time to release an R-rated comedy."

"Pets" will post the sixth-best opening of 2016 following "Captain America: Civil War," "Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice," "Finding Dory," "Deadpool" and "The Jungle Book" — all members of the elite group of 39 titles that have opened with more than \$100 million domestically. It's also a new opening weekend domestic record for an original animated film, topping the \$90.4 million launch of "Inside Out" last summer.

The "Pets" voice cast includes Louis C.K., Eric Stonestreet, Kevin Hart, Jenny Slate, Ellie Kemper, Lake Bell, Dana Carvey, Hannibal Buress, Bobby Moynihan, Steve Coogan and Albert Brooks. "Despicable Me's" Chris Renaud directs and Yarrow Cheney co-directs from a script by Cinco Paul, Ken Daurio and Brian Lynch.



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