

Modern trends in the assortment and growing technology of pome fruit species in the Republic of Serbia

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SUMMARY

Fruit plantations in the Republic of Serbia cover 170,426 ha, of which about 20% is occupied by pome fruit species. The share of pome fruits in the total fruit production in the Republic of Serbia is nowadays about 25% and further progress is expected due to larger demands for these fruits, especially apple. The pome group is dominated by apple, which is characterized by frequent changes in the assortment and growing technology. Current trends in apple production are related to establishing high-density plantings with modern cultivars according to market demands and consumer preferences, which also include anti-hail nets and irrigation systems. The following commercial cultivars are currently the most important: 'Golden Delicious Reinders®', 'Granny Smith Challenger®', 'Superchief Spur Red

'Superchief Spur Red Delicious®', 'Red Delicious Jeromine', 'Gala Buckeye', 'Gala Fendeca', 'Fudži Kiku 8', 'Braeburn Mariri Red®', 'Evelina®' 'Pink Lady®'.

[*Erwinia amylovora* (Burnill)].

(2017),

170,426 ha (

Delicious®', 'Red Delicious Jeromine', 'Gala Buckeye', 'Gala Fendeca', 'Fui Kiku 8®', 'Braeburn Mariri Red®', 'Evelina®', and 'Pink Lady®'. In addition, the improvements in storage technology were discussed.

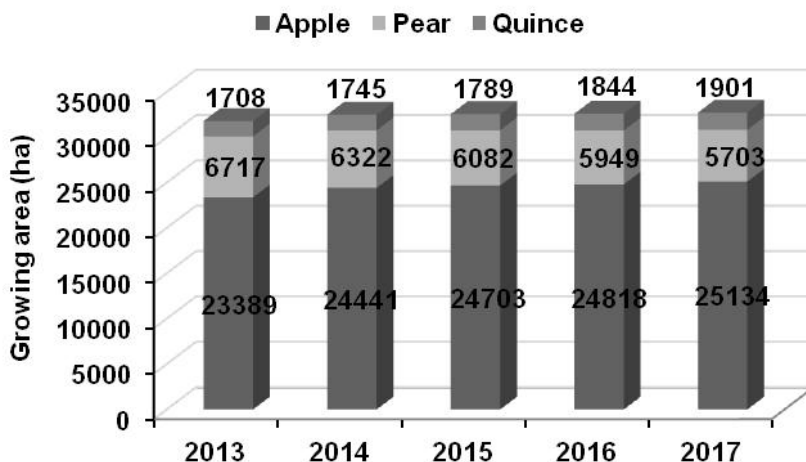
In recent years, new pear and quince plantations have been established on larger areas, but in comparison to apple, they are not followed by a modern assortment and the application of intensive growing technology. The pear cultivar structure is dominated by summer ('William's Bon Chrétien', 'Santa Maria' and 'Carmen') and winter cultivars ('Abate Fetel' and 'Cure'), whereas 'Leskova ka', 'Vranjska' and 'Champion' are the most important cultivars within the quince assortment. The main problems in pear and quince production are the choice of the appropriate rootstocks and the cultivar sensitivity to the fireblight [*Erwinia amylovora* (Burnill)].

This paper was undertaken primarily to give an overview of the current assortment and growing technology in the apple, pear and quince production in the Republic of Serbia. Considering the situation in the world, the prospects for further improvement in the pome fruits production were presented.

Key words: apple, pear, quince, cultivar, orchard management

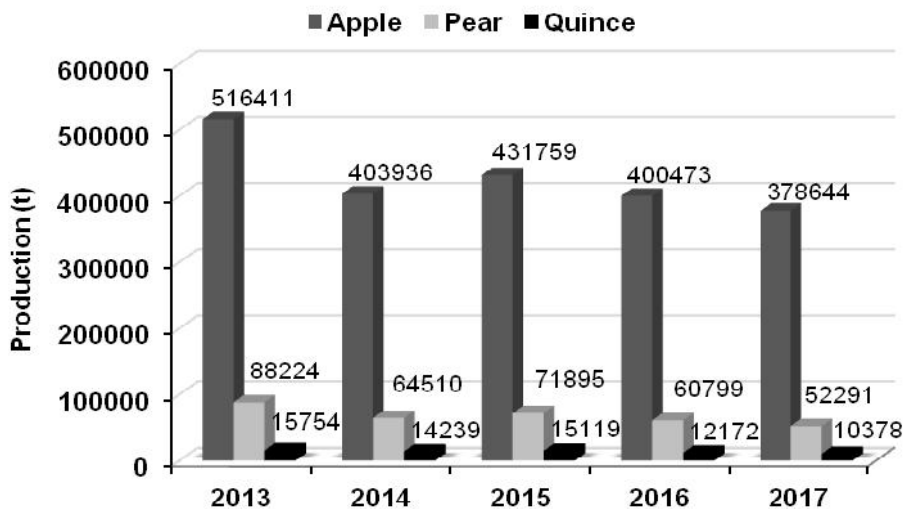
INTRODUCTION

Due to the favourable agro-ecological conditions for growing temperate zone fruit species, the Republic of Serbia has a long tradition of production and processing of these species. Our country is also the leading fruit producer in the region, and with regard to certain fruit species, the leading European and world producer. According to the data of the Republic Bureau of Statistics, Serbia (2017), the total area occupied by orchards amounts to 170,426 ha (average for the period 2013/2017),



1.
(2013/2017)
Fig. 1. Growing area of apple, pear and quince in the Republic of Serbia (2013/2017)

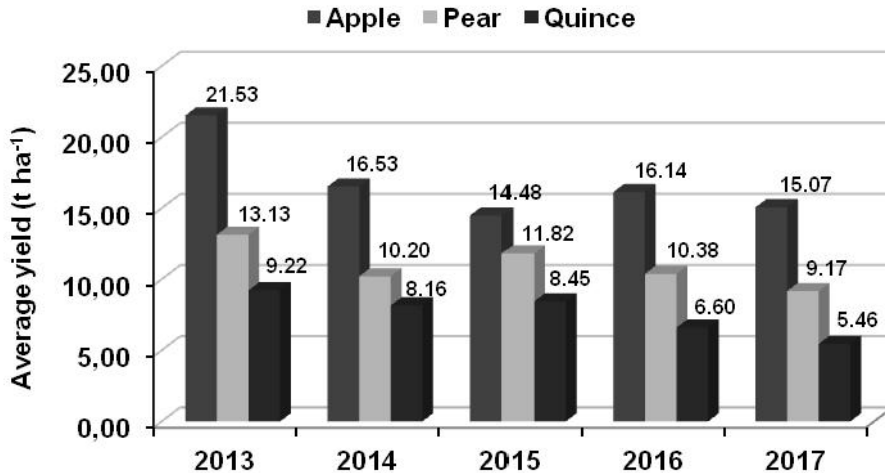
(FAO, 2018; Republic Bureau of Statistics, Serbia, 2017). In European scales, according to the apple-, pear- and quince-growing areas, our country is in the twelfth, tenth and first place, respectively (FAO, 2018; Republic Bureau of Statistics, Serbia, 2017).



2.
(2013/2017)
Fig. 2. Production of apple, pear and quince in the Republic of Serbia (2013/2017)

2013/2017 . 426 244,6 t
 (2),
 .
 543,8 t,
 (WAPA, 2016;
 , 2017).
 13532,4 t
 (FAO,
 2018,
 , 2017).
 .
 (2017),
 : 16,75 t ha⁻¹
 ; 10,94 t ha⁻¹ 7,58 t ha⁻¹
 (3).
 ,
 (FAO, 2018).

The average annual apple production in the Republic of Serbia in the period 2013/2017 was 426,244.6 tons (Figure 2), ranking our country as the seventh producer among European countries (WAPA, 2016; Republic Bureau of Statistics, Serbia, 2017). In the same period, the average annual pear production was 67,543.8 tons, which ranked our country on twelfth place in Europe (WAPA, 2016; Republic Bureau of Statistics, Serbia, 2017). Regarding the average annual production of 13,532.4 tons of quince, the Republic of Serbia represents a leading European producer (FAO, 2018, Republic Bureau of Statistics, Serbia, 2017). However, the real indicator of the situation in pome fruits production is yield. According to the data of the Republic Bureau of Statistics, Serbia (2017), average yields of certain pome fruit species in the assessed period are: apple – 16.75 t ha⁻¹; pear – 10.94 t ha⁻¹ and quince – 7.58 t ha⁻¹ (Figure 3). Compared to the yield of apple and pear of leading European countries, yields of these fruit species in the Republic of Serbia are several times lower (FAO, 2018).



3.
 (2013/2017)
 Fig. 3. Average yield of apple, pear and quince in the Republic of Serbia (2013/2017)

The yield and oscillations of the average annual production of pome fruit species have occurred as consequences of temperature changes during the period of dormancy, as well as the spring frost damage, drought, hail, surface water and alternate bearing. All of the above is an indicator that the largest number of orchards is extensive. In recent times, highly intensive apple plantations have been established, which will also affect the increase in total production and yield per unit area (Keserovi et al., 2013). Apple yields in these plantations range from 80 to 100 t ha⁻¹, with over 90% of extra and first-class fruits. Regarding this, average apple yields in some regions of the Republic of Serbia with a larger share of young and highly intensive plantations are 26,425.6 t ha⁻¹ (Republic Bureau of Statistics, Serbia, 2017). Furthermore, new plantations of pear and quince are being established, although they are not accompanied by intensive growing technology, as is the case of apple.

Choice of cultivars and rootstocks

Choice of apple cultivars and rootstocks and their mutual combinations is the most important for establishing new commercial orchard. When choosing a cultivar, it is necessary to take into account high standards of fruit quality, specificity of the consumers' demands on target market and strong competition. Furthermore, the agro-ecological conditions of the sites in which the planting of new orchard is planned should be taken into account. In older apple orchards in the Republic of Serbia, the cultivar 'Idared' is most prevalent, followed by the cultivars from the group 'Golden Delicious', 'Granny Smith', 'Jonagold' and 'Red Delicious' (Nikoli et al., 2012). Among newly-introduced cultivars in modern plantations, a significant share belongs to the cultivars 'Golden Delicious Reinders', 'Granny Smith Challenger', 'Superchief Spur Red

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Reinders', 'Granny Smith Challenger', 'Superchief Spur Red Delicious', 'Red Delicious Jeromine', 'Gala Buckeye', 'Gala Fendeca', 'Fuji Kiku 8', 'Braeburn Mariri Red', 'Evelina' and 'Pink Lady' (Luki et al., 2016a).

" 21 %, -
2016 ., (WAPA, 2016). -
11 %, " " 9 %.
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" " " " " " "
" " " " (Guerra, 2016.).

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'Golden Delicious' – 'Reinders', 'Granny Smith' – 'Challenger';
'Red Delicious' – 'Superchief Sandige', 'Redchief Camspur', 'Scarlet Spur Evasni', 'Red Cap Valdor';
'Red Delicious' – 'Red Delicious Redvelox', 'Red Delicious Jeromine', 'King Roat Red Delicious';
'Fuji' – 'Fui Kiku 8', 'Fubrax';
'Jonagold' – 'Red Jonaprince';
'Gala' – 'Gala Schnitzer Schinga', 'Brookfield Baigent Gala', 'Buckeye Gala Simmons', 'Galaxy Selecta', 'Devil Gala';
'Braeburn', 'Hillwell Hidala', 'Mariri Red'.

9.

Delicious', 'Red Delicious Jeromine', 'Gala Buckeye', 'Gala Fendeca', 'Fuji Kiku 8', 'Braeburn Mariri Red', 'Evelina' and 'Pink Lady' (Luki et al., 2016a).

The leading apple cultivars in the European Union in 2016 (WAPA, 2016) were those from the 'Golden Delicious' group, with a production share of about 21%. Cultivars from the group 'Gala' follow with a share of about 11%, whereas the 'Idared' ranks third with a share of about 9%. According to the data from the same source, the share of the 'Idared' in the European Union's apple production has doubled in the last ten years, which can be associated with the demands of the Russian consumer market. Also, some analyses and estimations showed that, despite a large number of newly released apple cultivars, for ten years now the world's leading cultivars will still be 'Golden Delicious', 'Red Delicious', 'Gala', 'Fuji', 'Idared', 'Granny Smith' and 'Braeburn' (Guerra, 2016). Based on these analyses and considering the agro-ecological conditions of the Republic of Serbia for the establishment of intensive apple plantations, the following cultivars are recommended: 'Golden Delicious' – 'Reinders', 'Granny Smith' – 'Challenger'; 'Red Delicious' spur type group – 'Superchief Sandige', 'Redchief Camspur', 'Scarlet Spur Evasni' and 'Red Cap Valdor'; 'Red Delicious' standard types group – 'Red Delicious Redvelox', 'Red Delicious Jeromine' and 'King Roat Red Delicious'; 'Fuji' group – 'Fui Kiku 8', and 'Fubrax'; 'Jonagold' group – 'Red Jonaprince'; 'Gala' group – 'Gala Schnitzer Schinga', 'Brookfield Baigent Gala', 'Buckeye Gala Simmons', 'Galaxy Selecta' and 'Devil Gala'; 'Braeburn' group – 'Hillwell Hidala' and 'Mariri Red'.

The most prevalent apple rootstock in the world and in our country is M 9. Worldwide, different clones of the

- , - T337 NAKB. 9, - , - , - , - , - NAKB (T) 337. 9 106 26 , " , - 18 19 (Milatovi , 2009). " , " , - " , - " , - WAPA (2016) " (42,3 %), " " (13,4 %) " (11.6 %).

- aforementioned rootstock, characterized by better rooting are used. The most important of them is T337 NAKB clone. Other rootstocks that are similar to M 9 are also used worldwide, although they show better results in terms of resistance to fireblight, wooly apple aphid and low temperatures, but none of them has been introduced in the Republic of Serbia.

- Leading rootstocks in modern high-density apple plantations, where intensive agro and pomological measures are applied, should be M 9 and the clone NAKB (T) 337. They are recommended for moderately vigorous and vigorous cultivars. Rootstocks MM106 and M26 are recommended for grafting of spur types of 'Red Delicious' grown under non-irrigated conditions.

- The European pear has the most stable assortment of cultivars among fruit species. The production of pear both in the world and in our country is dominated by the cultivars released in 18th and 19th century (Milatovi , 2009). The pear assortment in the Republic of Serbia is dominated by summer cultivars of which most prevalent are 'William's Bon Chrétien' and 'Santa Maria', while in recent years, the 'Carmen' has become more important cultivar. Among winter pear cultivars, the most commonly grown is 'Abate Fetel'. In very old orchards, the cultivar 'Cure' is present, which is not recommended for the establishment of new plantations due to the poor fruit quality. According to the WAPA data (2016), the following pear cultivars are prevalent in the territories of the European Union: 'Conference' (42.3%), 'Abate Fetel' (13.4%) and 'William's Bon Chrétien' (11.6%). Previous experience showed that the 'Conference' was not suitable for growing under Serbian ecological conditions, due to the occurrence of burns on leaves.

- When choosing a pear cultivar structure for commercial production, the lack of early and medium-early ripening cultivars on the market should be taken

(Nikoli and Mitrovi, 2009).

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" , - (Luki et al.,

2016b). " , " , "

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, - (Cydonia oblonga L.),

- , -

(Pyrus comunis L.). -

- Pyrus communis L. (OH x F). -

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into account (Nikoli and Mitrovi, 2009). Of the earlier ripening cultivars, 'Bella di Giugno', 'Juliana', 'Coscia Precoce', 'Butirre Precoce Morettini' and 'Turandot' are recommended for growing. Considering the fact that pear cultivars with a red blushed or completely red fruit skin are required on the world market for growing on smaller areas, the mid-early ripening cultivar 'An elija' may be interesting too. 'An elija' is a newly released, completely dark red skinned cultivar from the Fruit Reserch Institute, a ak (Luki et al., 2016b). Among autumn and winter cultivars, besides the 'Abate Fetel', the cultivars 'Beurre Bosc' and 'Packham's Triumph' are also recommended.

Pear production is characterized by the absence of a polyvalent rootstock that would be adapted to different soil conditions and be compatible with the grown cultivars. Apart from that, when choosing a pear rootstock, we should bear in mind the possibility of irrigation and the purpose of the production. The most commonly used rootstocks in Europe are the vegetative ones originating from quince (Cydonia oblonga L.), which reduce the vigour and affect earlier productivity of grafted pear cultivars. The main disadvantage of these rootstocks is poor compatibility with certain pear cultivars. Beside them, the pear-derived rootstocks (Pyrus comunis L.) are also used. In the United States, clonal Pyrus communis L. (OH x F) rootstocks are mostly used. They are best adapted to the climatic conditions and soils of this country, and are resistant to fireblight and wooly apple aphid. Pear rootstocks used in the Republic of Serbia are the seedlings of wild pears and vegetative rootstocks originating from quince.

In the forthcoming period, the use of wild pear seedling as a rootstock can be recommended only in the case of establishing plantations under conditions without irrigation. In high-density pear

29 : ADAMS, MA,
 SYDO. ú ,
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 (Nikoli , 2009),
 (Nikoli et al., 2012).
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plantations, the leading rootstock in the upcoming period should be: quince ADAMS, quince MA, quince Ba 29 and quince SYDO. Use of the quince MC is not recommended due to the susceptibility to severe winter frosts.

In the world's production of quince there are about 100 cultivars with no cultivar dominating the production (Nikoli , 2009), namely some cultivars are specific to certain region (Nikoli et al., 2012). In our country, the old indigenous cultivars 'Leskovacka' and 'Vranjska' are mainly grown, while the Bulgarian cultivar 'Champion' is present to a lesser degree. In order to intensify the quince production, apart from 'Leskovacka' and 'Champion', a domestic cultivar 'Morava', derived from planned hybridization at the Fruit Research Institute, a ak, as well as introduced cultivars 'Asenica', 'Triumph' and 'Hemus' are also recommended.

In the production of quince in the Republic of Serbia, vegetative rootstocks originating from quince have been used. In practice, the most commonly used rootstock is quince MA due to its good compatibility with all cultivars, but the priority should be given to the quince Ba 29 due to its stronger root and tolerance to higher lime content in the soil. The use of quince SYDO is recommended as well.

Growing technology

Planting material. Successful fruit production cannot be achieved without high quality nursery trees. Well-developed and healthy nursery trees allow early cropping and faster return of investments. For establishing highly intensive apple and pear orchards, nursery trees with adequate number of well-developed premature branches are deployed in the formation zone of the future crown. These are so-called knip nursery trees that provide early productivity (Hrotko et al., 2000; Wertheim et al., 2000), thereby

(Hrotko et al., 2000; Wertheim et al., 2000).

(Palmer and Warrington, 2000)

(Van der Berg, 2003).

[*Erwinia amylovora* (Burnill)].

(Nikoli , 2009).

20

controlling the vegetative growth of trees as well. Apart from that, in the first years after planting, manipulation with trees is easier (Palmer and Warrington, 2000), and during exploitation such trees are more productive and require less labor in the process of crown formation and care (Van der Berg, 2003). In the last few years, some nurseries in the Republic of Serbia started producing these trees, though such production does not meet the needs of growers in terms of cultivar assortment and quality of material and therefore the large quantities of apple and pear nursery trees are imported.

Similar situation is with nursery trees for the new quince orchards. The main problem in quince production is sensitivity to the fireblight [*Erwinia amylovora* (Burnill)], and one of the basic ways to overcome this problem is the use of one-year certified or standard nursery trees that come from selective and healthy mother trees (Nikoli , 2009). At this moment in our country, there are not enough mother trees for grafting, and some of the quality cultivars are not included in the official national list of cultivars. There is also a lack of quality mother planted rootstocks.

Plantation establishment.

Productivity of pome fruit species is known to be conditioned by an adequate selection and a combination of compatible cultivars, as well as their planting order. When establishing apple and pear plantations in the Republic of Serbia in the previous period, the most commonly used was the combination of cultivars in double rows. The main cultivar was represented with six or four rows and pollinizer cultivars with two or four rows. This concept has been retained in pear plantations to date, while in apple the concept of monocultivar orchards is used today, which means that a pollinizer cultivar is planted as every 20th tree in a row, thus achieving a share

3 %
 (crabapples)
 'Professor Springer', 'Golden Gem',
 'Crimson Gold', 'Everest', 'Red Santinel'
 'Hillary'
 -
 -
 -
 -
 -
 (Keserovi et
 al., 2017).
 3.20 m 3.60 m
 0.60-0,65 m
 0,75-0,80 m
 3900 5200.
 4.5-5 m x 2.5-3.5 m
 1,0 m 3.2-3,5 m x 0,8-
 ADAMS
 [Erwinia amylovora (Burnill)]
 [Cacopsilla piry
 (L.)],
 (Radivojevi et al., 2017a).
 -
 -
 5-6 m,
 3-4 m.

of about 3% of pollinizers in the plantation.

The flowering crabapples, such as 'Professor Springer', 'Golden Gem', 'Crimson Gold', 'Everest', 'Red Santinel' and 'Hillary' are used as pollinizers, because they generally have slightly earlier and longer flowering time than main cultivars, and also there is no confusion about what to pick at harvest. This orchard design provides easier protection against diseases and pests, as well as thinning and fruit harvesting (Keserovi et al., 2017).

In recent apple plantations, the planting has been standardized with planting space 3.20 m to 3.60 m between rows, and 0.60–0.65 m in-row spacing for spur types and 0.75–0.80 m for standard cultivars. The number of plants per hectare varies from 3,900 to 5,200.

Intensification of pear and quince production is limited by the rootstock selection. Depending on the rootstock used, the space in pear plantations varies from 4.5–5 m x 2.5–3.5 m in case of wild pear seedling, up to 3.2–3.5 m x 0.8–1.0 m if the ADAMS or MA quince is used as the rootstock. Establishing of high-density plantings is not recommended in the Republic of Serbia, because they involve high investments with uncertain outcome, primarily due to difficult control of the fireblight [*Erwinia amylovora* (Burnill)] and pear psyllid [*Cacopsilla piry* (L.)], as well as vigour control and insufficient knowledge of specific growing technology (Radivojevi et al., 2017a). Newer orchards of quince are based on a somewhat larger planting space in relation to apple and pear. The distance between rows is 5–6 m, while in-row spacing is 3–4 m.

Training system. When choosing a training system in modern plantations, there is a tendency to bring young trees into production early, actually to develop

a strong tree architecture that can support crop loads. The most represented training system in intensive apple plantations in the Republic of Serbia is spindle and some of its modifications, while in older orchards there is a presence of spindle bush, pyramidal crown and open vase crown. In recent pear orchards in our country in the case of grafting of cultivars on the rootstocks of poorer vigor, the spindle has been used.

Spindle bush, pyramidal crown and palmetto are used as a training system, if rootstock is the seedling of wild pear. The most commonly used training system for quince is open vase crown, although experience has shown that good results are achieved in case of the use of pyramidal crown as well.

Crop load management. Pome fruit species are known as very demanding in terms of growing technology. The standard in apple production in the Republic of Serbia is a high-density planting with anti-hail nets and irrigation systems simultaneously set up with the plantation establishment. Anti-frost systems have been sporadically installed too. These reduce the risk of negative impacts of certain meteorological circumstances on yield (Veli kovi and Golijan, 2015). The use of anti-hail nets and installation of irrigation systems in pear and quince plantations in our country is a rare case. In order to achieve regular and high yields accompanied by appropriate fruit quality, regular and timely application of appropriate agro- and pomo-technical measures is necessary such as: winter and summer pruning, irrigation, fertilization, anti-hail protection, frost protection, chemical thinning, etc.

Golijan, 2015).

(Veli kovi and

Pruning is certainly one of the most important pomological measures applied in plantations. It aims at proper formation and maintenance of the crown, productivity and vigour regulation, high quality of fruits and a long life of trees. Nowadays, in apple plantations in Serbia, short pruning is being replaced by the so-called long pruning, where two-year branches are not shortened. In this way, the vigor of fruit trees is decreased, the formation of flower buds is stimulated, and thus chemical thinning of fruits facilitated, resulting in better coloration of fruits and a decrease in their fall-off.

Introduction of modern growing systems brought the inevitability of using green pruning. During vegetation period, within pruning, the two key terms are distinguished. The first, at the time of the intense growth of the shoots and is directed towards the formation of a type of crown by selecting the necessary and removing unnecessary and competitive shoots. The second term is after the intensive growth of shoots has been completed and, in addition to some corrective actions directed towards the formation of the crown form, it mainly refers to the stimulation of differentiation of flower buds for the next year, stimulation of the fruit development and coloring, contributing to better protection against diseases and pests.

The issue of regulating the vigor of trees is especially evident in pear plantations. Apart from the reduction of nutrition and irrigation, cutting of the root system is also applied during the period of dormancy. Application of growth regulators is possible as well, and in our country, 'Regalis', which represents prohexadione-calcium[®], has been registered for these purposes (Radivojevi et al., 2017b).

Besides regulation of tree vigor, some growth regulators have been used in modern plantations of pome fruit

® (Radivojevi et al., 2017b).

(Keserovi et al., 2009; Luki et al., 2012a, 2012b; Luki and Mari, 2013), (ATS), (Mili et al., 2011). (NAD), (NAA) 6- (BA). (3 GA₄₊₇) (Radivojevi et al., 2017b). NAA, AVG (MCP (AVG + NAA, MCP AVG + NAA (Yuan and Li, 2008).

species for flowers and fruits thinning, to prevent the differentiation of generative buds, to stimulate germination of partenocarp fruits and to prevent the fruit drop before harvest. From the aforementioned, in apple plantations in the Republic of Serbia, plant growth regulators are used for thinning of flowers and fruits. Based on intensive research conducted in our country (Keserovi et al., 2009; Luki et al., 2012a, 2012b; Luki and Mari, 2013), chemical thinning has been introduced into regular practice. Flower thinners are mostly based on ammonium thiosulphate (ATS), which is considered user, environment and consumer safe (Mili et al., 2011). Naphthalene acetamide (NAD) preparations, -naphthylacetic acid (NAA) and 6-benzyladenine (BA) are used for fruit thinning.

Pear and quince flower and fruit thinning is not common in developed countries. Treatment with gibberellins (A₃ or GA₄₊₇) is recommended for the purpose of forming partenocarp fruits in pears.

Some apple cultivars, which are at the same time most represented in our country, such as 'Idared', 'Jonagold' and 'Red Delicious' groups, and to some degree the cultivars from the 'Golden Delicious' group, are characterized by high ethylene production and tendency to pre-harvest fruit drop (Radivojevi et al., 2017b). Such fruits have no optimal colour, maturity and size and cannot be used accordingly. In order to prevent these significant losses in apple orchards, NAA, AVG (amino ethoxy vinyl glycine) and MCP (methylcyclopropene) are recommended to be used alone or in combination AVG + NAA, or MCP and AVG+NAA (Yuan and Li, 2008).

One of the most important agro-technical measures in modern plantations of pome fruit species is fertilization.

and Large, 1977). (Ankerman and Large, 1977). (Miši , 1994). (Miloševi and Miloševi , 2015). (Jivan and Sala, 2014). (Nikoli et al., 2012).

Fertilization provides compensation of certain nutrients in the root system zone of plants enabling their normal life cycle. The quantities of certain elements that need to be put into the soil are specified according to the determined fertility of the soil (Ankerman and Large, 1977) and delivering nutritional elements necessary for vegetative growth and fruiting of the trees (Miši , 1994). Fruit nutritional state and determination of the specific needs for certain nutritive elements is most likely to be defined by leaf analyzing (Miloševi and Miloševi , 2015), which is not a common practice in our country. Different systems of fertilization in the orchards of pome fruit species (soil application of granular fertilizers or fertigation through drip emitters) in the Republic of Serbia are applied.

In modern plantations, foliar nutrition is applied too, compensating that way less lacking quantities of nutrients in leaves and fruits. The type and rate of the applied nutritives is defined according to soil and climatic conditions, vegetation stage, orchard management practices, i.e. irrigation (Jivan and Sala, 2014).

In the most developed fruit growing countries, the concept of Integrated fruit production has been applied in practice to 90% and more of the surface (Nikoli et al., 2012). In this production concept, the regulations prescribe all agro-technical measures (protection, fertilization, irrigation, thinning, land maintenance, harvesting, storing, etc.). According to the respective programme, a special attention is given to the choice of means for protection against diseases and pests, with holding period and application methods according to possible side effects, preventive and biological measures. This concept implies filing for inclusion in the integrated production mode, acceptance of the obligation to comply with the prescribed technology and its control from the competent service and finally, marketing that

"AGRIOS"
(Keserovi et al., 2007;
2012)

(Keserovi et al., 2017).

ú.

(CA),

1 % ((ULO),

(DCA),

"Fitomag",

"SmartFresh®"

1-

2011

2016

- provides a more favorable market position. Based on the "AGRIOS" model from South Tyrol, in some apple plantations in Vojvodina, development of the Integrated Production Model in the Republic of Serbia has begun (Keserovi et al., 2007; 2012) and in the upcoming period, the transition of conventional to integrated fruit production is necessary to be done in modern apple orchards (Keserovi et al., 2017).

Harvesting and storing fruits. The quality of fruits is a basic precondition for successful marketing largely conditioned by the harvest time and storage conditions. The greatest progress in the Republic of Serbia has been made in the modern apple storage technologies.

An ever-increasing number of apple growers, with the aim of properly determining the harvest time have been increasingly using methods such as iodine-starch test, firmness of fruit and soluble solids content, while being decreasingly reliant on experience and subjective evaluations such as fruit coloration.

Following the increase of apple production, the number and capacity of modern controlled atmosphere (CA) storages has also been increasing. Most commonly, these storages have the possibility of reducing oxygen and carbon dioxide levels below 1% (ULO), while Dynamic Controlled Atmosphere (DCA) technology, which allows the keeping of fruits at very low oxygen concentrations, has also been used in some storages.

Synthetically produced quality enhancers of apple fruit, such as 'SmartFresh®' and 'Fitomag', which contain 1-MCP, have been registered in the Republic of Serbia since 2011 and 2016, respectively.

These quality enhancers are capable of

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(Magazin et al., 2010; 2017).

(Magazin and urovi , 2017).

MCP-

inhibiting ethylene action and positively affect the firmness and juiciness of fruits, longer retention of the skin green colour preventing the occurrence of scalds in susceptible cultivars (Magazin et al., 2010; 2017).

- In order to further intensify the storage technology of apple fruits, more attention should be paid to adequate application of agro- and pomo-technical measures in the orchard, which primarily refers to proper nutrition, irrigation and application of bioregulators and calcium (Magazin and urovi , 2017).

- On the other hand, most of the pear production is being processed and smaller share is intended for table consumption, therefore the longer storing of fruits is rare. Based on the experience from other developed countries, the fruits of 'William's Bon Chrétien', as well as the fruits of other autumn and winter pear cultivars, can be successfully kept in CA storages over a longer time period.

1- Treatment with 1-MCP-based quality enhancers is recommended. Apart from that, the quality of classification and packaging of pear fruits must be significantly improved which are basic preconditions for their recognition in the international market. Since the fruit of quince is planned for processing, keeping the fruit in regular cold storages is just a temporary measure applied in some cases.

CONCLUSIONS

- During the last few years, the following major changes in the production of pome fruit species in the Republic of Serbia (especially apple) have been made: new cultivars and clones of old ones, as well as new rootstocks of poorer vigour, are being introduced in modern plantations; high quality nursery trees are

used for planting; growing technology is intensified by: increasing the number of plants per unit area, introducing many new agro- and pomotechnical measures, and increasing area with installed irrigation systems and anti-hail nets; controlled atmosphere storage technology is being used for long-term storage in order to maintain good fruit quality and extend shelf life of fresh fruits.

Further activities aiming to intensify apple, pear and quince production are based on the aforementioned measures. In addition, it is also important to emphasize the support of the state in production modernization through enabling favorable loans and subsidizing establishment of plantations, procurement of appropriate irrigation systems, anti-hail and anti-frost protection, procurement of agricultural machinery, and building of storage capacities.

In order to achieve international standards in terms of fruit quality and to increase competitiveness in the market, further association of growers is required to bring substantial improvement in leading, supporting, coordinating, representing and promoting the pome fruits production in the Republic of Serbia.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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in vitro

Pyrodwarf

1*, 2, 1,
 1, 2,
 11000,

An assessment of genetic integrity of *in vitro* shoots of Pyrodwarf pear rootstock

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SUMMARY

- *in vitro*
 Pyrodwarf (*Pyrus communis* L.). *In vitro*
 ()
).
 , *in vitro*
in vivo
 (2n = 2x = 34) *in*

The most important aspect of *in vitro* propagation technology is to verify genetic fidelity of tissue culture-raised plants. In the present study, three techniques were employed to assess genetic integrity of micropropagated shoots of Pyrodwarf (*Pyrus communis* L.) pear rootstock. *In vitro* shoots derived either from organized meristems (axillary origin) or from leaf explants (adventitious origin). Flow cytometry analysis deployed to estimate the DNA ploidy level revealed no significant differences in nuclear DNA content among adventitious regeneration-derived shoots, *in vitro* shoots of axillary origin and *in vivo* control plants from open field. Chromosome counting in root tip meristems also showed a normal diploid chromosome number (2n = 2x = 34) in both type of *in vitro* shoots.

in vitro (POX), POX
in vitro
 POX
 /
 :
 2001).
in vitro
 70- 20-
Pyrus communis (Bell and Reed,

However, polyacrylamide gel electrophoresis of peroxidases (POX) extracted from the leaf tissue revealed the same POX banding patterns in open field mother plants and *in vitro* shoots of axillary origin, while adventitious-derived *in vitro* shoots exhibited polymorphism in POX profiles depending on the specific cytokinin/auxin combination used for adventitious regeneration. The obtained results indicate that although tissue culture plants maintained gross genetic stability at cytogenetic level, further investigation using powerful DNA markers is required, especially in adventitious regeneration-derived shoots.

Key words: axillary branching, adventitious organogenesis, cytokinins, auxins, flow cytometry, chromosome number, isoperoxidase

INTRODUCTION

Plant tissue culture has become a major propagation tool for many plant species, especially for fruit tree rootstocks. Namely, the traditional methods of propagation and maintenance of disease free rootstocks in nursery facilities are extremely time- and labor-consuming processes (Bommineni et al., 2001). Development of tissue culture techniques has paved the way for rapid propagation and conservation of elite rootstock germplasm, especially when the quality of planting material is required on a large scale and for a short time. Also, *in vitro* culture techniques in combination with recombinant DNA technology are currently being used as a powerful tool for improvement of existing germplasm and development of transgenic plants.

Since the late 1970s, micropropagation protocols by axillary shoot proliferation have been published for over twenty cultivars of pear, including the major *Pyrus communis* cultivars (Bell and Reed, 2002). *In vitro* propagation has

2002). *In vitro*

Pyrus pyrifolia (Burm F.) (Thakur and Kanwar, 2008), *P. betulaeifolia* L. (Yeo and Reed, 1995; Hassanen and Gabr, 2012), *P. pashia* (Rehman et al., 2014), *P. calleryana* (Yeo and Reed, 1995; Antunes de et al., 2004), *P. communis* (Yeo and Reed, 1995; Mehri-Kamoun et al., 2004; Rahman et al. al., 2007; Ruži et al., 2011; Wang, 2015; Dimitrova et al., 2016).

OHF333 BP10030 (Zhu and Welander, 2000; Nacheva et al., 2009), Fox11 Pyrodwarf (Martinelli et al., 2009; Vujovi et al., 2014).

(PGRs),

in vitro

1981).

(Martin et al., 2006).

(Thorpe, 1994).

also been reported in several pear rootstocks like *Pyrus pyrifolia* (Burm F.) (Thakur and Kanwar, 2008), *P. betulaeifolia* L. (Yeo and Reed, 1995; Hassanen and Gabr, 2012), *P. pashia* (Rehman et al., 2014), *P. calleryana* (Yeo and Reed, 1995; Antunes de et al., 2004) as well as different *P. communis* rootstocks (Yeo and Reed, 1995; Mehri-Kamoun et al, 2004; Rahman et al., 2007; Ruži et al., 2011; Wang, 2015; Dimitrova et al., 2016). Micropropagation via adventitious shoot regeneration from leaf explants has also been established for dwarfing pear rootstocks, such as OHF333 and BP10030 (Zhu and Welander, 2000; Nacheva et al., 2009), Fox11 and Pyrodwarf (Martinelli et al., 2009; Vujovi et al., 2014). Most of these studies have concentrated on the influence of plant growth regulators (PGRs), mineral composition of medium, age and type of explants, origin of explants, incubation conditions (duration of subculture, photoperiod, light intensity, temperature), on shoot regeneration capacity *in vitro*. However, genetic variability, termed somaclonal variation, can be generated during tissue culture (Larkin and Scowcroft, 1981). Therefore, clonal fidelity is of major importance in micropropagation of fruit tree species having long generation time.

Micropropagation based on axillary branching is considered adequate in providing genetic uniformity and true-to-typeness of *in vitro* plants, but plant growth regulators especially synthetic ones applied at sub- and super-optimal levels have been shown to be associated with somaclonal variation (Martin et al., 2006). On the other side adventitious shoot proliferation in plant cell and tissue culture, especially if it occurs indirectly via an intermediate callus phase, often results in somaclonal variation, making this strategy less desirable for large scale clonal multiplication (Thorpe, 1994).

Various methods can be used for the detection of somaclonal variation in

(Bairu et al., 2011)
 (Jin et al., 2008).
in vitro
 'Pyrodwarf'
 (*Pyrus communis* L.) (
). *In vitro*
 Vujovi et al. (2014).

tissue culture-raised plants. They are broadly categorized as morphological, physiological/biochemical, cytological and DNA-based molecular techniques. Each of these techniques has their particular strengths and limitations (Bairu et al., 2011) and therefore different approaches are usually required for a correct evaluation of this complex phenomenon (Jin et al., 2008).

In the present study, three techniques (chromosomal number counting, flow cytometric analysis of relative nuclear DNA content and isoperoxidase analysis) were employed to assess genetic integrity of *in vitro* shoots of Pyrodwarf (*Pyrus communis* L.) pear rootstock. *In vitro* shoots were micropropagated either by axillary shoot proliferation or by adventitious shoot regeneration according to the protocols previously described by Vujovi et al. (2014).

In vitro
 'Pyrodwarf'
 (*Pyrus communis* L.).
 ($2n = 2x = 34$)
 BU 5-18 800
 "Old Home"
 "Bonne Luise d'Avranches",
 (Jacob, 2002).
 Vujovi et al. (2014).
 Murashige Skoog
 (1962) (MS), 1 mg l⁻¹ BA,
 0,1 mg l⁻¹ NAA 0,1 mg l⁻¹ GA₃.
in vitro

MATERIAL AND METHODS

In vitro stock culture was established from apical and lateral buds taken from mature trees of pear rootstock Pyrodwarf (*Pyrus communis* L.). This rootstock is diploid ($2n = 2x = 34$) and it was singled out as clone BU 5-18 among 800 seedlings obtained from crossings of 'Old Home' × 'Bonne Luise d'Avranches', undertaken at the Geisenheim Research Institute, Germany (Jacob, 2002).

Aseptic culture of this genotype was established according to the procedure previously described by Vujovi et al. (2014). Micropropagation through enhanced axillary branching was performed on Murashige and Skoog (1962) medium (MS) supplemented with 1 mg l⁻¹ BA, 0,1 mg l⁻¹ NAA and 0.1 mg l⁻¹ GA₃. Regeneration of adventitious shoots was carried out using young fully expanded leaves sampled from *in vitro* proliferating axillary shoots. Petioles were excised, leaves were cut three times transversely across the mid-vein, placed

6	23 ± 1 °	16-	with adaxial surface touching regeneration medium and cultured for 6 weeks at 23 ± 1 °C and 16-h photoperiod.
	MS		The basal medium for regeneration was MS medium supplemented with four PGR combinations: TDZ at 1 mg l ⁻¹ and 2 mg l ⁻¹ each combined with either 2 mg l ⁻¹ IBA or 2 mg l ⁻¹ NAA (2 repetitions × 3 petri dishes × 10 explants per each PGR combination).
	PGR: TDZ	1	
mg l ⁻¹	2 mg l ⁻¹ , 2 mg l ⁻¹ IBA	2 mg l ⁻¹ NAA (2 × 10	
	3	× 10	
	(PGR)).	-	These PGR combinations were selected based on the results of previous regeneration experiments (Vujovi et al., 2014).
	(PGR)	-	
	(Vujovi et al., 2014).		Adventitious shoots obtained from all treatments were isolated separately, numbered as individual lines and subsequently transferred on MS multiplication medium containing 1 mg l ⁻¹ BA, 0.1 mg l ⁻¹ NAA and 0.1 mg l ⁻¹ GA ₃ . After successful proliferation, both axillary and adventitious shoots were rooted on MS medium with mineral salts reduced to 1/2, organic complex unchanged, and 1 mg l ⁻¹ IBA and 0.1 mg l ⁻¹ GA ₃ .
MS			
NAA	0.1 mg l ⁻¹ GA ₃ .	1 mg l ⁻¹ BA, 0.1 mg l ⁻¹	
MS		1/2,	
		1 mg l ⁻¹ IBA	
0.1 mg l ⁻¹ GA ₃ .			Experiments included monitoring of different multiplication and rooting parameters (Table 1). Data were analyzed by ANOVA followed by Duncan's Multiple Range Test for mean separation (P 0.05).
	(1).	
	ANOVA		
	Duncan		
	(P 0.05).		
		arcsine	Before the analysis, data presented in the form of percentage were subjected to arcsine transformation.
		21	Leaf samples collected from 21-day-old <i>in vitro</i> axillary and adventitious shoots originating from different regeneration media were used for flow cytometric analysis of DNA ploidy level. <i>In vivo</i> plants from the open field were used as control plants for ploidy comparison.
		<i>in vitro</i>	
		<i>In vivo</i>	
Plant Cytometry Services	Gerard Geenen, (Schijndel,		Flow cytometric analysis was performed by Gerard Geenen, Plant Cytometry Services (Schijndel, The Netherlands).

).
 -
 Arumuganathan & Earle (1991).
 -
 (*Ilex crenata*
 "Fastigiata" , 2C = 2,16 pg)
 G_0/G_1 (2C)
 300,
 FL2-DAPI).
 (G₀/G₁) ,
 G_0/G_1
in vitro
in vitro
 48 4 ° 2 μM
 (Ruži et al., 1991)
 24
 +4 °
 12 5 N
 i,
 Feulgen
 2-4
 Boškovi (1998).
in vivo , *in vitro*
in vitro
 (PAGE)
 5-12.5%
 TBE 8.3 (0.09
 Tris - 0.0024
 Na₂EDTA).

Preparation of suspensions of intact nuclei
 was performed following the method of
 Arumuganathan and Earle (1991).
 Together with each leaf sample an internal
 standard (*Ilex crenata* 'Fastigiata' leaf
 tissue, 2C = 2.16 pg) was also included,
 and its G₀/G₁ peak (2C) was adjusted to
 around channel 300 set on a linear scale
 of fluorescence intensity (FL2-DAPI). DNA
 ratios were obtained by dividing the mean
 of the dominant (G₀/G₁) peak of each
 sample by the mean of the G₀/G₁ peak of
 internal standard.

To determine the chromosome
 number of *in vitro* shoots, five root apices of
in vitro rooted axillary and adventitious
 shoots originated from different
 regeneration media were randomly
 collected. Actively growing root tips were
 pre-treated in the dark for 48 h at 4 °C with
 2 μM beta-hydroxyquinolene (Ruži et al.,
 1991) and subsequently fixed for 24 h in
 acetic alcohol in the dark at +4 °C.
 Hydrolysis took 12 min in 5 N HCl, at room
 temperature. Root tips were strained using
 the Feulgen procedure and squashed in a
 drop of acetocarmine. Metaphase
 chromosomes were counted in 2–4 cells
 from each sample.

The extraction of native proteins
 from leaf samples was performed
 according to the method described by
 Boškovi (1998). Protein extracts were
 prepared from young, recently expanded
 leaves of *in vivo* plants, *in vitro* shoots of
 axillary origin and adventitious-derived *in
 vitro* shoots originating from different
 PGR treatments. A minimum of two
 independent samples from each type of
 genetic material were used for protein
 extraction. Polyacrylamide gel
 electrophoresis (PAGE) of isozymes was
 performed on 5–12.5% density gradient
 polyacrylamide gels containing TBE
 buffer pH 8.3 (0.09 M Tris-boric acid and
 0.0024 M Na₂EDTA). The electrophoresis

1 3 100 300 V, -
 , 4 ° , TBE -
 (POX) 3,3', 5,5'- -
 (TMBZ) (50 ml 1 -
 , 50 mg TMBZ 2 ml 202 25 ° ,
).

was carried out for 1 and 3 h at 100 and 300 V, respectively, at 4 °C, using TBE as a tank buffer. Gels were stained for peroxidase (POX) activity using 3,3',5,5'-tetramethylbenzidine (TMBZ) (50 ml 1 M sodium acetate buffer pH 4.7, 50 ml methanol, 50 mg TMBZ and 2 ml H₂O₂, at 25 °C, in the dark).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After six weeks of culture, rate of adventitious shoot regeneration on MS media supplemented with different PGR combination ranged between 15–20%. Regeneration was indirect and clusters of small shoots were formed on the abaxial side of leaves (Figure 1 a–d).

MS
 (PGR)
 15-20%.
 (1 a-d).



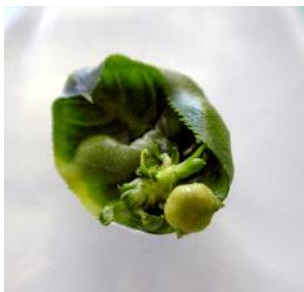
a



b



c



d

'Pyrodwarf'

MS
 TDZ 1 IBA 2 mg l⁻¹ (a); TDZ 1 NAA 2 mg l⁻¹ (b); TDZ 2 i IBA 2 mg l⁻¹ (c); TDZ 2 i NAA 2 mg l⁻¹ (d)

Fig. 1. Adventitious shoots of Pyrodwarf pear rootstock regenerated on MS medium supplemented with different PGR combinations: TDZ 1 and IBA 2 mg l⁻¹ (a); TDZ 1 and NAA 2 mg l⁻¹ (b); TDZ 2 i IBA 2 mg l⁻¹ (c); TDZ 2 i NAA 2 mg l⁻¹ (d)

MS (20%), IBA, NAA (15%). (Vujovi et al., 2014), MS 1 mg l⁻¹ BAP, 0.1 mg l⁻¹ NAA 0.1 mg l⁻¹ GA₃. 5 (1). (4), (1). *in vitro*

Higher values of shoot regeneration (20%) were obtained on MS media supplemented with IBA in comparison with those supplemented with NAA (15%). Obtained results are in accordance with previous regeneration experiments in this genotype (Vujovi et al., 2014), although the regeneration rates are slightly higher than those obtained initially. Following regeneration, adventitious shoots were successfully multiplied on MS medium containing 1 mg l⁻¹ BAP, 0.1 mg l⁻¹ NAA and 0.1 mg l⁻¹ GA₃. Upon 5 weeks of cultivation, parameters of multiplication were measured and compared with those of axillary shoots (Table 1). In the rooting stage, towards the end of the rooting period (4 weeks), the rooting parameters were also compared between shoots of different origin (Table 1). The results obtained revealed no significant differences for most of the measured parameters between shoots of different origin. As regards the number of roots per rooted shoot and root length, significantly higher values were obtained in shoots of adventitious origin, while the length of lateral shoots was higher in those of axillary origin. No differences in morphology were noticed between the *in vitro* shoots of different origin.

1.

,Pyrodwarf'

Table 1. Comparison of multiplication and rooting parameters between Pyrodwarf shoots of axillary and adventitious origin

Origin of shoots	Multiplication index	Length of axial shoots (mm)	Length of lateral shoots (mm)	Rooting (%)	No. of roots	Root length (mm)	Rooted shoot length (mm)
Axillary shoots	2.28 a*	20.0 a	13.5 a	90.0 a	4.4 b	20.8 b	18.9 a
Adventitious shoots	2.15 a	19.2 a	12.0 b	80.0 a	6.6 a	30.0 a	16.8 a

*

(P 0.05)

*Mean values for each parameter followed by the same letter are not significantly different according to Duncan's Multiple Range Test (P 0.05)

Chromosome instability including numerical (aneuploidy, polyploidy) and structural (deletions, duplications, inversions) chromosome changes is a very common phenomenon in tissue culture especially when propagation technique involves regeneration via callus formation. Therefore, cytological investigations involving chromosome analysis have been considered useful for the evaluation of genetic fidelity of tissue culture-raised plants (Chittora and Sukhwai, 2016).

Chromosomal variations were frequently found in plants regenerated from cell suspensions and callus cultures (Al-Zahim et al., 1999; Tremblay et al., 1999; Jin et al., 2008). However there are reports of cytological variation in *in vitro* shoots derived from organized meristems and micropropagated through axillary branching (Radi et al., 2005; Devi et al., 2015).

In contrast, results on ploidy level analysis performed in our study by using two complementary approaches suggest that, no changes in ploidy level occurred in 'Pyrodwarf' shoots derived either from organized meristems (axillary origin) or from leaf explants (adventitious origin).

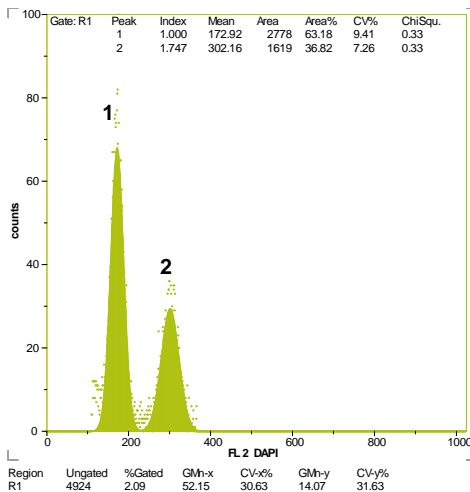
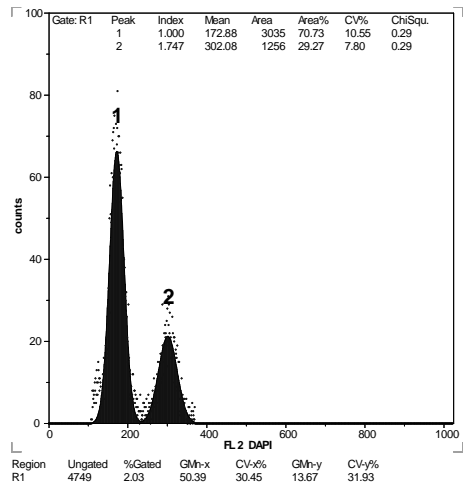
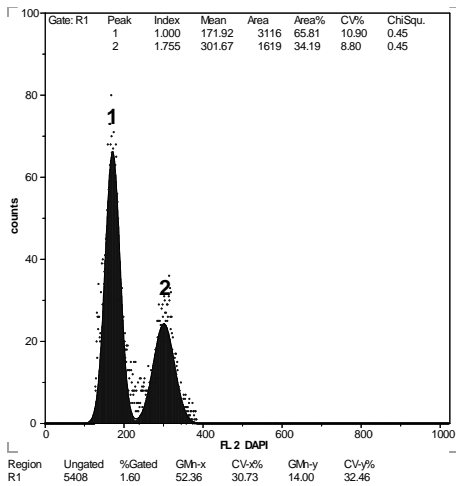
The ploidy level of *in vitro* raised shoots was estimated by flow cytometric analysis of small pieces of leaves sampled from the shoots of different origin. Figure 2a–c shows representative DNA histograms of control plants from open field, micropropagated shoots of axillary origin and adventitious shoots regenerated on MS medium containing 1 mg l⁻¹ TDZ and 2 mg l⁻¹ IBA.

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b
 DAPI
 'Pyrodwarf'
 : () , (b)
 , (c)
 . 1 - G_0/G_1 ; 2 -

Fig. 2. Representative flow-cytometric histograms of DAPI stained nuclei isolated from leaf tissue of Pyrodwarf pear rootstock plants of different origin: (a) control plant from the open field, (b) micropropagated shoot of axillary origin, (c) adventitious regeneration-derived shoot. 1 - G_0/G_1 peak of samples; 2 - G_0/G_1 peak of an internal standard

0.57),
 (0.57) *in vivo*
 (0.57) (2).
 G_0/G_1 (170)
 (1),
in vitro
in vivo,
 (2n = 2x = 34).
 FL2-DAPI

(0.56-

No significant differences in relative DNA ratios were observed among adventitious regeneration-derived shoots (0.56–0.57), micropropagated shoots of axillary origin (0.57) and *in vivo* control plants (0.57) (Table 2). Channel position (around 170) of the G_0/G_1 peak and the total number of peaks (1), along with similar nuclear DNA content of *in vitro* shoots of axillary origin and adventitious regeneration-derived shoots, corresponded to those of *in vivo* plants taken as diploid control (2n = 2x = 34). Although linear FL2-DAPI histograms of relative nuclear DNA content of leaves of all types of *in vitro* shoots showed single

in vitro,
10.9%. CV
Eucalyptus spp. (Grattapaglia and Bradshaw, 1994), Prunus spp. (Vujovi et al., 2012), Rubus sp. (Vujovi et al., 2010). Loureiro et al. (2007),
Loureiro et al. (2007)
(CV)
(Loureiro et al., 2005).

G₀/G₁
(CV)
8.2

distinct G₀/G₁ peaks, coefficients of variation (CV) of these peaks were high and varied from 8.2 to 10.9%. High CV values were also recorded in other woody species such as *Eucalyptus* spp. (Grattapaglia and Bradshaw, 1994), *Prunus* spp. (Vujovi et al., 2012), *Rubus* sp. (Vujovi et al., 2010).

According to Loureiro et al. (2007) woody plant species contain phenolic compounds that are released during the nuclear isolation and may affect the accessibility of the dye to nuclear DNA. As nuclear isolation buffer can significantly minimize negative effects of some cytosolic compounds on DNA staining, the isolation buffer recommended by Loureiro et al. (2007) should be used to obtain histograms of higher resolution. High CV values could mask the possible occurrence of aneuploidy, which implies the necessity to conduct some complementary studies, such as chromosome counting for evaluation of ploidy level (Loureiro et al., 2005).

2.

'Pyrodwarf'

Table 2. Relative DNA ratio in leaf samples of Pyrodwarf pear rootstock plants of different origin

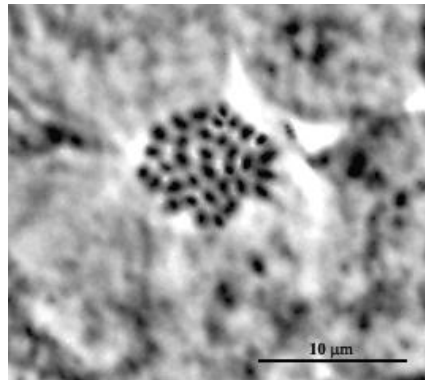
/Origin of plant	Relative DNA ratio*	DNA ploidy level
(<i>in vivo</i>) Control plants from open field (<i>in vivo</i> control)	0,57	2n = 2x = 34
/Axillary shoot	0,57	2n = 2x = 34
MS Adventitious shoot regenerated on MS medium containing 1 mg l ⁻¹ TDZ and 2 mg l ⁻¹ IBA	0.56	2n = 2x = 34
MS Adventitious shoot regenerated on MS medium containing 1 mg l ⁻¹ TDZ and 2 mg l ⁻¹ NAA	0.57	2n = 2x = 34
MS Adventitious shoot regenerated on MS medium containing 2 mg l ⁻¹ TDZ and 2 mg l ⁻¹ IBA	0,57	2n = 2x = 34
MS Adventitious shoot regenerated on MS medium containing 2 mg l ⁻¹ TDZ and 2 mg l ⁻¹ NAA	0.56	2n = 2x = 34

*Ilex crenata 'Fastigiata' was internal standard for determination of relative DNA ratios. Relative DNA ratios are mean values of 3 independent measurements per each type of plant material

in vitro

($2n = 2x = 34$) (3).

By light microscopy examination, we detected cells of normal morphology and single nucleus in the root meristems in both types of *in vitro* shoots. The chromosome counting in actively-dividing meristems of axillary shoots as well as of adventitious regeneration-derived shoots revealed neither polyploid nor aneuploid cells. The chromosome number determination showed a normal diploid chromosome number ($2n = 2x = 34$) (Figure 3).



. 3

'Pyrodwarf' ($2n = 2x = 34$)

Fig. 3. Metaphase chromosomes in root tip meristem cells of adventitious shoots of pear rootstock Pyrodwarf ($2n = 2x = 34$)

in vitro

Characterisation of *in vitro* shoots of different origin was also performed by polyacrylamide gel electrophoresis of isoperoxidases proven to be useful biochemical markers for detecting somaclonal variability (Elmaghrabi and Ochatt, 2006).

(Elmaghrabi and Ochatt, 2006).

4

Figure 4 shows representative electrophoretic profiles obtained by staining with TMBZ for peroxidases extracted from leaves of plants of different origin. Each band was marked with an abbreviation for peroxidase in capital letters (POX), followed by a number run in order from the slowest- to fastest-migrating form. The first run from left to right is a control plant from the open field,

(POX),

the second one is a shoot of axillary origin and the third to the sixth runs relate to adventitious shoots originating from different regeneration media.

The gel analysis was based on the presence or absence of bands, while differences in band intensity were not considered as a distinctive character. Five polymorphic bands were detected in POX profiles of all analysed samples, regardless of the origin of the plants (Figure 4). Bands designated as POX2 and POX 5 ($R_m = 0.12$ and $R_m = 0.42$, respectively) was evidenced everywhere. Electrophoretic profiles of *in vivo* control plants from open field and *in vitro* shoots of axillary origin were identical and they had additional polymorphic band POX4 ($R_m = 0.25$).

That band, but of lower intensity, was also presented in the adventitious shoots originated from media containing 2 mg l^{-1} TDZ and 2 mg l^{-1} IBA or NAA. Regardless of the origin, all adventitious shoots had polymorphic band POX3 ($R_m = 0.14$), which was not evidenced in *in vivo* control plants from open field and *in vitro* shoots of axillary origin.

In addition, one slowest band (POX1, $R_m = 0.09$) was present only in adventitious shoots originated from media containing 1 mg l^{-1} TDZ and 2 mg l^{-1} IBA or NAA. Results obtained indicate that adventitious-derived *in vitro* shoots exhibited polymorphism in POX profiles depending on the specific cytokinin/auxin combination used for adventitious regeneration.

Similarly, some other reports suggested that at specific cytokinin/auxin combinations and ratios, adventitious regeneration system can induce variability (Nehra et al., 1992; Vujovi et al., 2010).

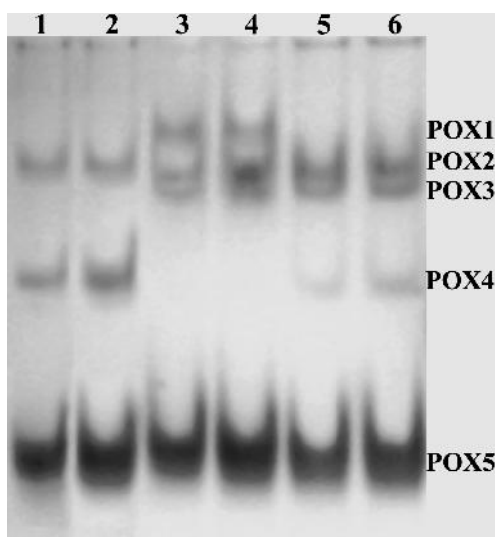
the second one is a shoot of axillary origin and the third to the sixth runs relate to adventitious shoots originating from different regeneration media.

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4. TMBZ. 'Pyrodwarf' (1), MS (PGR): 1 mg l⁻¹ TDZ + 2 mg l⁻¹ IBA (3), 1 mg l⁻¹ TDZ + 2 mg l⁻¹ NAA (4), 2 mg l⁻¹ TDZ + 2 mg l⁻¹ IBA (5), 2 mg l⁻¹ TDZ + 2 mg l⁻¹ NAA (6)
 Fig. 4. Isoperoxidase patterns of Pyrodwarf leaf samples obtained by staining with TMBZ. Control plants from open field (1), shoot of axillary origin (2), adventitious shoots regenerated on MS medium with different PGR combinations: 1 mg l⁻¹ TDZ + 2 mg l⁻¹ IBA (3), 1 mg l⁻¹ TDZ + 2 mg l⁻¹ NAA (4), 2 mg l⁻¹ TDZ + 2 mg l⁻¹ IBA (5), 2 mg l⁻¹ TDZ + 2 mg l⁻¹ NAA (6)

CONCLUSIONS

The obtained results indicate that although tissue culture plants maintained gross genetic stability at cytogenetic level, further investigation is required, especially in adventitious regeneration-derived shoots. Somaclonal variation is a complex phenomenon that usually demands different approaches for adequate evaluation.

Karyological analysis cannot reveal alternation in specific genes or small chromosomal rearrangements. Therefore, molecular-based markers should also be included in any further study.

As regards peroxidase polymorphism detected in adventitious shoots, additional research should focus on comparing of POX profiles among *ex vitro* adapted

ex vitro
,
in vivo

plants of adventitious, axillary origin and
in vivo control plants.

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Effects of rain-shield cultivation system on generative potential of blackberries a anska Bestrna

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SUMMARY

The economic significance of the European blackberry (*Rubus subg. Rubus* Watson) makes it an important berry fruit in Serbia, where it is positioned immediately after raspberry and strawberry. In recent years (2012–2016), according to the data from the Republic Statistic Department, blackberry production in the Republic of Serbia significantly oscillated. The investigation was conducted in ‘ a anska Bestrna’ blackberry plantings using the intensive cultivation technology, i.e. rain-shield. The paper presents results of a three-year study (2012–2014) into the impact made by rain-shield cultivation system on blackberry generative potential. It was observed that most of the tested parameters were affected by cultivation technology and environmental conditions during the investigation, as well as by their interaction. In terms of the generative potential parameters, number of fruiting branches (14.05 ± 0.38), inflorescence (123.59), fruits (323.72), and yield per cane (3,395.81 g) were higher in blackberries under rain shields than

().

:

,

,

,

(Nikolic and Milivojevic, 2010),

,

2012 ,

(15000 t),

2016 . (17991 t) (, 2013).

(25-30.000 t),

,

,

(Karaklaji -Staji , 2016).

,

20%

,

(Tanovi et al. (2009) , *Botrytis cinerea* Pers. 30%.

,

(Miši and Nikoli , 2003).

Ho (1992) ,

,

standard cultivation system (open-field cultivation).

Key words: blackberry, rain shields, yield, Serbia

INTRODUCTION

- In the group of berries, blackberry is, by economic importance for the Republic of Serbia, positioned next to raspberry and strawberry (Nikolic and Milivojevic, 2010), though its production is characterized by a continuous reduction, which is conditioned by the low price of the fruits. According to the data from the Republic Statistic Department, in 2012, due to the extremely cold period and extreme droughts, the yield was significantly reduced (15,000 t), followed by a slight increase in the production in 2016 (17,991 t) (Republic Statistic Department, 2013). In order to achieve and maintain production at the optimal level for the Republic of Serbia (25–30,000 t), as well as to eliminate the variation of yield, fruit quality, price and demand on the market, it is necessary to apply newer cultivation technologies and technological processing methods as well as to partially change the assortment (Karaklaji -Staji , 2016). Cultivar structure is one of the reasons for the delay in blackberries placement on the market, but also the fact that the Republic of Serbia loses more than 20% of total blackberry yield annually due to the harmful effects of abiotic factors (frost, rain, drought, hail). Tanovi et al. (2009) point out that phytopathogenic fungi *Botrytis cinerea* Pers. causes a decrease in blackberry yield of about 30%.

Modern blackberry production is characterized by high profitability, long exploitation period, high yields and good quality of fruits (Miši and Nikoli , 2003). Ho (1992) states that the fruit yield is determined by the interaction of cultivation conditions, physiological and morphological traits.

Strik (2012)

Number of fruiting branches, inflorescence and yield per cane are the parameters of the generative potential of blackberries, i.e. indicators of productivity. According to Strik (2012), the differentiation of generative buds in strawberry, raspberry, blackberry and blueberry is largely conditioned by light regime, temperature conditions and cultivation system applied. In this regard, intensification of blackberry cultivation technology should be directed towards improving fruit quality and ensuring harvest and delivery of fruits. Depending on the construction type, the cultivation of blackberries in closed and semi-closed area can be realized in different ways. Rain-shields represent simpler and extremely profitable cultivation systems in semi-closed area.

The objective of the investigation is to indirectly examine the impact of the rain-shield cultivation on the generative potential of blackberry ' a anska Bestrna'.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Experimental design

(2012-2014.)

2006

53°N, 20° 20' E

290 m

290 m,

3,0 m 1,5 m,

150 μ,

The investigation was conducted over a three-year period (2012–2014) in the experimental trial of blackberry cultivar ' a anska Bestrna', which was established in 2006 and is located at Gornja Gorevnica (43° 53'N latitude, 20° 20' E longitude, 290 m altitude) near a ak city, Western Serbia. This is mainly an upland area, with an average altitude of about 290 m, characterised by the temperate continental climate. The blackberries were planted in rows spaced 3.0 m apart with plants set at 1.5 m apart in the row, and trained as a three-wire trellis. Plastic arches were placed on the existing trellis structure in the blackberry plantings. The arches were covered using 150 μ thick foil, forming the shape of an umbrella (Rain-shield cultivation). The trial was conducted using a randomised block design and it included four replications of

“ ” 1984 “ ” 4-5 “ ” 89 “ ” 9.3 g (15 g). ACS System Electronic Ascale (Zhejiang,).

each treatment. Fertilization and irrigation practices standard for the region were provided during the period of investigation.

Plant material

Blackberry cultivar ‘ a anksa Bestrna’ made in 1984 from the cross ‘Dirksen Thornless’ × ‘Black Satin’ in Fruit Research Institute, a ak. It is highly vigorous cultivar, produces 4-5 strong, in mid-section bent canes, with short internodes. The flowering season is mid-late. It is self-fertile, abundant cropper. Resistant to low winter temperatures. It is medium resistant to yellow rust (*Kuehneola uredinis* (Link)) and susceptible to purple blotch of blackberry (*Septocya ruborum* (Lib.) Petrark). Ripening season is mid-early, in the beginning of the third decade of July. The fruit is large. Average fruit weight is around 9.3 g (fruit weight of individual fruits amount to 15 g). It is elongated-cylindrical, glossy black, with sweet-subacid taste and pronounced aroma. It contains 89 drupelets on average. ‘ a anksa Bestrna’ is suitable for both fresh use and freezing and for various forms of processing as well. In different agroecological conditions this cultivar has displayed excellent performance in respect of cropping and resistance to diseases and low winter temperatures.

Determination of generative potential

Determination of the generative potential of the examined blackberry cultivar was performed by establishing the number of number of fruiting branches, inflorescence, fruits, and yield (g) per cane. Examinations of the generative potential parameters are performed by counting and measuring at fruiting canes. Yield per cane is determined by measuring of the picked fruit weight from each harvest using electronic scale ACS System Electronic Ascale (Zhejiang, China).

±
(SE).
LSD
(ANOVA),
MSTAT-C (Michigan State University,
East Lansing, MI, USA).
0.05

Statistical analysis

The results are presented as mean ± standard error of mean (SE). Differences between mean values were compared by LSD test in two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) using MSTAT-C statistical computer package (Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI, USA). Differences with *p* values of 0.05 were considered insignificant.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Within the generative parameters of the studied blackberry, the results of examining number of fruiting braches, inflorescence, fruits (Table 1), and yield per cane (Table 2) are shown in the function of the cultivation techniques over the three-year period.

1.

Table 1. Effect of cultivation techniques on parameters of generative potential of blackberry ' a anska Bestrna'

Treatment	Number of fruiting branches per cane	Number of inflorescence per cane	Number of fruits per cane
/ Cultivation techniques (A)			
Rain shield	14.60 ± 0.51 a	123.59 ± 2.90 a	323.72 ± 10.34 a
Standard	14.05 ± 0.38 a	112.61 ± 4.50 b	285.90 ± 13.34 b
Year (B)			
2012	16.28 ± 0.26 a	99.65 ± 2.49 c	362.99 ± 13.67 a
2013	13.89 ± 0.38 b	131.31 ± 3.29 a	281.74 ± 8.88 b
2014	12.81 ± 0.57 c	123.35 ± 4.32 b	269.70 ± 10.86 b
/ Cultivation techniques × Year (A × B)			
Rain shield	2011.	16.24 ± 0.46 a	98.25 ± 3.91 c
	2012.	12.91 ± 0.49 c	143.16 ± 4.92 b
	2013.	14.67 ± 0.46 b	129.37 ± 2.94 a
Standard	2011.	16.33 ± 0.26 a	101.04 ± 3.26 c
	2012.	14.87 ± 0.33 b	119.46 ± 3.42 b
	2013.	10.95 ± 0.44 d	117.32 ± 5.57 b
ANOVA			
A	nz		
B			
A × B			

p 0.05 LSD ; ns –
Values within each column followed by the same small letter are insignificantly different at the *p* 0.05 by LSD test; ns - non significant differences

Analysis of variance determined that the cultivation system and year of

98.25 143.16
364.32.

12.81 16.33,
246.90

- study, as well as their interaction effect, statistically significantly influenced the number of inflorescences and fruits per cane, while the number of fruiting branches per cane in blackberry was significantly influenced by year and interaction of the cultivation system/year was determined. Average values of the number of fruiting branches, inflorescence and fruits per cane ranged in the interval from 12.81 to 16.33, from 98.25 t 143.16 and from 246.90 t 364.32, respectively.

- The application of the rain-shield cultivation system during the three-year experiment period significantly influenced the most important parameters of the blackberry generative potential. A significant increase compared to the standard cultivation system was found in the number of inflorescence and fruits per cane, whereas for the fruiting branches number, higher values were also noted, but with no significance. Moreover, significantly higher number of inflorescence and fruits per cane has been recorded in the rain-shield system, which is probably the consequence of the significantly higher length of the canes determined in the mentioned cultivation system. Gliši (2004) states that number of fruiting branches per cane is largely conditioned by the cane length, number and the length of lateral branches after pruning of blackberry. Significant differences in the number of fruiting branches and inflorescence per cane were also found between the years of study, while in terms of number of fruits per cane, the significance of differences was recorded only in relation to the first year. These differences in the number of fruiting branches and inflorescence per cane between the years of study occurred most likely as an outcome of different climatic conditions in the period of flower bud differentiation, since blackberry belongs to the late flower bud differentiation cultivar group. (Namely, flower buds differ in one-year cane leaves' armpit, from the second half of

Gliši (2004)

(Gliši , 2004; Veli kovi , 2004).

Strik (2012),

(2004)

Veli kovi

September until beginning of October, in a year prior to flowering (Gliši , 2004; Veli kovi , 2004). If we observe the result tendency related to the number of fruiting branches for each cultivation system in each year of the study, we will notice number of fruiting branches, which indicates that the value of the mentioned generative potential parameter was the result of the interaction effect between cultivation system and cultivation conditions in certain years. According to Strik (2012), the differentiation of flower buds in blackberries, raspberries, strawberries and blueberries is conditioned to a considerable extent by the complex activity of abiotic factors, among which temperature conditions, light regime, soil moisture, and also the applied cultivation technology should be highlighted. Also, Veli kovi (2004) states that the dominance of carbohydrates (photosynthesis products) in relation to accumulated nitrogen (the product of the root system activity) in tissues, leads to a moderate growth and an abundant flower bud differentiation.

2.

Table 2. Effect of cultivation techniques on parameters of generative potential of blackberry ' a anska Bestrna'

		Yield per cane (g)	
		/Cultivation techniques (A)	
	/Rain shield		3,395.81 ± 45.84 a
	/Standard		2,843.45 ± 46.35 b
/Year (B)			
2012			3,199.06 ± 58.29 a
2013			3,109.20 ± 66.64 a
2014			3,072.85 ± 79.35 a
		/Cultivation techniques × Year (A × B)	
	/Rain shield	2012	3,543.37 ± 70.48 a
		2013	3,351.11 ± 61.20 a
		2014	3,292.93 ± 56.33 a
	/Standard	2012	2,805.56 ± 80.45 a
		2013	2,867.29 ± 51.33 a
		2014	2,852.78 ± 50.84 a
ANOVA			
A			*
B			ns
A × B			ns

$p < 0.05$ LSD ; ns – Values within each column followed by the same small letter are insignificantly different at the $p < 0.05$ by LSD test; ns - non significant differences

Bal and Meesters (1995), Eyduran et al. (2008) and Hanson et al. (2011).

2,805.56 3,395.81

g.

(Privé and Allain, 2000; Burkhart and White, 2003)

Gaskell (2004)

As an important agronomic feature, yield exhibited significant variation among different blackberry cultivation systems, as highlighted in the works of Bal and Meesters (1995), Eyduran et al. (2008) and Hanson et al. (2011). Analysis of variance determined that yield per cane of the examined blackberry cultivar was statistically significantly influenced by cultivation system. Average yield values per cane ranged from 2,805.56 to 3,395.81 g. Significantly higher values of yield per cane were found in semi-closed conditions of blackberry cultivation system. Research carried out on the remontan raspberry cultivars (Privé and Allain, 2000; Burkhart and White, 2003) also confirmed the increase of yields by cultivation in closed area. Gaskell (2004) states that the cultivation of raspberries in closed area is widespread in the US and is primarily intended for the production of fruits for fresh consumption, since modification and elimination of harmful effects of abiotic factors, primarily precipitation, enables better fruit quality and, on the other hand, extends the harvest period, which all together increases production profitability.

CONCLUSIONS

During the three years of study, the rain-shield cultivation system made a positive impact on the generative potential of blackberry. Regarding this, the preliminary results of studies into the more recent cultivation system, i.e. implementation of the rain-shield system in blackberry production, growers can be advised and given guidelines in the blackberry growing technology with a potential to advance the profitability.

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