

## Wild blackberries, a new crop? Agronomic characteristics (Part I of II)

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**Keywords:** blackberries; wild blackberries; production; characteristics.

### Abstract

Wild blackberries have a significant impact in world blackberry production. Due to the high chemical potential of wild blackberries and since Portugal has a unique group of wild blackberry species interest has increased in order to include that germoplasm in breeding programmes for further commercial use. With this aim, it was established a task in the European Project FP7 EUBerry, where it were performed agronomic studies, post-harvest quality assessment and phytochemical evaluation, in order to characterize some of those wild species that are present in northern Portugal.

In the agronomic evaluation, five species were grown: *R. vigoii*; *R. radula*; *R. henriquesii*; *R. sampaioanus* and *R. brigantinus*. For each one it was assessed plant growth, bud burst precocity and yield. Species showed high variability with significant differences in all characteristics. Among all species only two, *R. henriquesii* and *R. sampaioanus* had good growth characteristics and acceptable yield (quantity and quality). An export trial for the European markets revealed an interest and good response for this fruit, particularly in the Italian market.

In conclusion, agronomic characterization showed that wild species need to be introduced in breeding programmes prior to their introduction in a commercial scale. The occurrence of high variability germoplasm in Portugal represents an added-value to be explored for blackberries well adapted to the Portuguese climatic conditions, with good agronomic characteristics and commercially well accepted.