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**VALUABLE BLACKBERRY CULTIVARS TESTED IN RUBUS COLLECTION AT THE
RESEARCH INSTITUTE OF HORTICULTURE IN SKIERNIEWICE, POLAND**

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The blackberry world production is steadily increasing. In 2015 the total area of this crop was estimated to be 30 thousand hectares. In Europe the largest blackberry producers are Serbia and Hungary. There is very difficult to assess how much blackberry fruits produce Poland, because no separate official data in this matter are available, and blackberry is presented together with other fruits with low economic meaning. However, market observations show that in each year blackberry production is increasing. The climate of Poland, due to low temperatures during winters and springs, is not favourable for blackberry growing. For example, in January of 2016 the lowest temperature in the location of blackberry experiment was -18oC. In such conditions most of blackberry plants lost their flower buds and when the temperature drops even more the whole plantation can be ruined. Therefore, the main problem for Polish fruit growers is short assortment of hardy annual cultivars giving a regular yield of large, firm and attractive fruits.

In the Research Institute of Horticulture in Skierniewice, central Poland, there is situated Rubus field collection. The collection counts 143 genotypes of local and foreign genesis (cultivars and clones of raspberry and blackberry, wild types of Rubus genus and berry hybrids). Apart from preservation of gene bank resources, there are collected different data on yield and fruit quality of planted cultivars, their resistance to diseases and pests, bush vigour and survival. The results revealed that among cultivars tested 'Chester', 'Čačanska Bestrna', 'Loch Ness' and 'Loch Tay' are valuable in Polish climatic conditions and can be cultivated in open area, while 'Oregon', 'Black Satin', 'Black Butte' and 'Karaka Black' require cover systems like plastic tunnel or greenhouse.

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