Heirloom Tomato Trellising Trials

A PFI Cooperators Study

Purpose

Which tomato training system best keeps disease pressure at bay in an heirloom tomato planting?

Which promotes best production levels?

Method

Cultivar – Cherokee Purple
Three trellis methods
Twenty plants per trellis style
Fifty to sixty foot rows
Three participating CSA/Market farms
All plants started on respective farms
No spray
Mulch assumed, irrigation as needed

Trellis Methods

Cattle Panel

3 to 4 t-posts wired per panel
Tomatoes clipped or tied to panel

Stake & Weave

Post Every three tomatoes
Twine weaved through tomatoes each foot in height
Hedge posts on ends, t-posts every third post, rebar others

Cage

Single cage per plant
Supported with two posts

Overall Results

Marketable Tomatoes in Pounds All Trellis Methods			
	Beebout/Skeehan	Faux	Libbey/Landgraf
Cattle Panel	58	106.1	74.75
Stake/Weave	50.5	37.2	102.75
Cage	38.25	78.4	80.25
Total	146.75	221.7	257.75

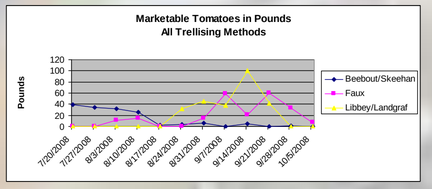
Cull Percentages*		
	Beebout/Skeehan	Faux
Cattle Panel	73%	41%
Stake & Weave	65%	31%
Cage	58%	26%
Overall	66%	32%

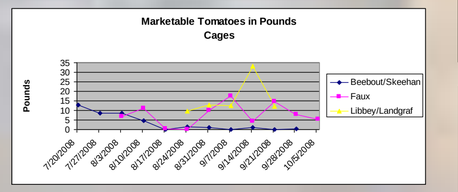
* Libbey/Landgraf estimate 50% cull rates for all

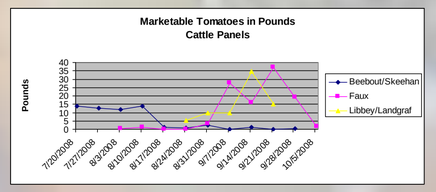
Marketable Yield Analysis

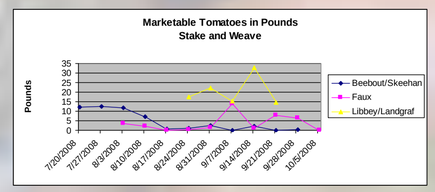
Total Production in Pounds		
	Blue Gate	GFF
Cattle Panel	79.50	258.90
Stake & Weave	78.00	118.80
Cage	65.50	305.70

Weekly Marketable Yields



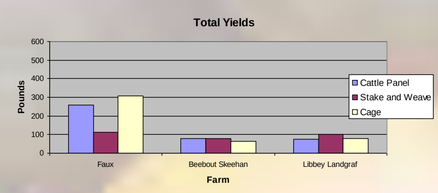






Prevalent Trellis System

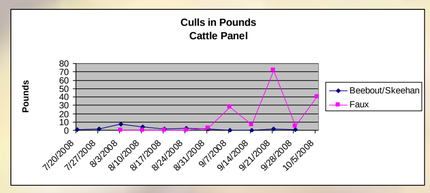
Libbey/Landgraf – Cattle Panel
Beebout/Skeehan – Stake & Weave
Faux - Cage

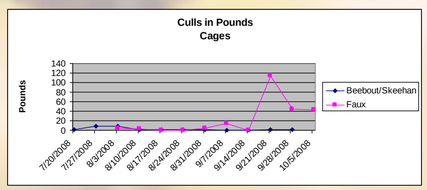


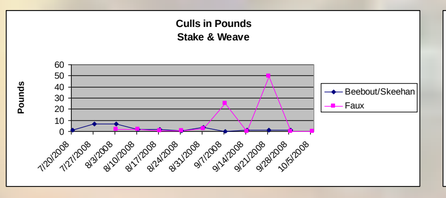
Conclusions

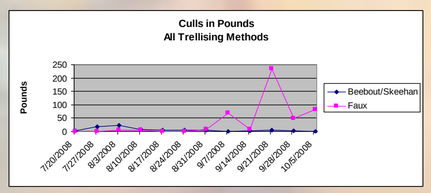
No statistical support for any method
Atypical growing season resulted in atypical yields
Prior experience with each trellis method may lead to success
Labor and resource benefits may provide best reasons for trellis style choices

Cull Harvest Levels









	Cattle Panel	Stake & Weave	Cage
Pro	Easy Harvest Moderate in-season work	Easy storage Minimal clean up Minimal investment	Easy set up Minimal in-season work
Con	Sizable initial investment Set up & tear down takes 2 people	Highest in-season effort Wind problems reported (1 farm)	Storage difficult Fall clean up difficult

Blue Gate Farm – Jill Beebout & Sean Skeehan
Genuine Faux Farm – Rob & Tammy Faux
One Step at a Time – Jan Libbey & Tim Landgraf
PFI Project Coordination – Sally Worley
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Genuine Faux Farm