**Growing Cranberries in Connecticut** – Although there is only one documented commercial cranberry bog remaining in Connecticut, at the Bishop’s Orchards Farm Market in Killingworth, this was not always the case. In the 1800s, it was common to find cranberries being grown for personal use, trade, or for commercial use in Connecticut. The northern part of the United States has the ideal conditions for growing cranberries. Today most of the cranberries are grown in very large commercial operations, due in part to the fact that the growing process requires unique soil conditions, large bogs, and is labor intensive. The larger producers are in Wisconsin and Massachusetts. Much of the Massachusetts production is in and around Cape Cod. In 2020, Wisconsin produced about 61% of the country’s cranberries at about 250 farms, producing 500 million pounds. Massachusetts produces about a third of the country’s cranberry harvest with the remainder produced mostly in New Jersey, Oregon, and Washington with smaller amounts grown in Delaware, Maine, and Michigan.

In the 1800s, many towns in Connecticut had a number of relatively small cranberry bogs, but little has been done to inventory the location of old cranberry bogs. In Tolland, environmental studies have identified a few of the commercial cranberry operations and a number of family bogs where cranberries were grown for personal use. George Maxwell of Rockville had two commercial bogs in Tolland: one on Gehring Road and one on Baxter Street. Other commercial bogs included Kelley’s and Reed’s on Mile Hill and Reed Road, one off Grant Hill Road, and Charter’s, off Charter Road, along the Skungamaug River.

Other small bogs were also found on Gehring Road, associated with the large Tolland Marsh along the Skungamaug River, Brooks Mill at Johnson Pond, on Sugar Hill Road with a connecting bog southerly of Kendall Mountain Road on the Schindler-Schmidt Conservation Property, a bog off Ladd Road at the Ellington Tolland town line, a bog at Mitchell’s Poehnert Pond on Rt. 74, and a bog on the Leonard/Bach farm property at 255 Tolland Stage Road on a section of the property extending northerly on Crystal Lake Road, Rt. 30. Other bog areas to be verified can be done in one of two ways: deed searches and/or with a proper site evaluation process. The latter process relies on an understanding of conditions required for a successful growing process – a swampy area or an area with good water retention soil, sandy soil, sunny area, good supply of water, good drainage, and a May to October growing season. In general, bogs are found near ponds or streams, or in low areas. Sandy soil will not normally be an indicator of a bog in Tolland as bog management would require adding sand periodically.

**Harvesting Cranberries** – There are two methods of harvesting cranberries - wet harvesting and dry harvesting. Wet harvesting is best for cranberries that will be turned into juice, jelly, or dried fruit, because the berries float to the surface. Dry harvesting is best for fresh cranberries, and usually involves collecting the cranberries by hand methods before flooding the bog.

Knowing these harvesting methods will help identify the type and purpose of the bogs. For wet harvesting more sophisticated water management systems is involved requiring a dam and water impoundment and generally a more well-defined channeling system. The wet harvesting system may have been used in the larger commercial operations. 9/4/24