TESTING SEED LONGEVITY VIA MSU CAMPUS ARCHAEOLOGY:
APPLYING BEAL'S METHODS TO HISTORIC RASPBERRY SEEDS
Background & Questions, Pt 1

• Seeds excavated from privy during 2015 Campus Archaeology Program field season
• What was the importance of raspberries to an early student’s diet?
• If they weren’t important to diet, why were these seeds located in the privy
• Were these seeds a failed horticultural experiment?
MSU and Berries

• Students would forage for berries
• Several pints of berries purchased for Saint’s Rest residents
• Dr. Beal purchased 300 berry producing bushes to be planted on campus in 1875
Questions, Pt 2

• Were seeds common in privies?
  • If so, what species were common?
• What is the history of raspberry cultivation?
Archaeology of Privies and Berries

• Generally very common in privies
• Sites in which seeds were recovered include:
  • Portsmouth, New Hampshire
  • Virginia City, Nevada
  • Faneuil Hall, Boston, Massachusetts
  • Cross City Back Lot, Boston, Massachusetts
Virginia City, Nevada

• Three soil samples
• Buckwheat and blackberry seeds in abundance
Portsmouth, New Hampshire

- 5 soil samples
- 2000 seeds
  - Locally available fruits, grains, and herbal medicinal treatments
- MAP OF SITE?
Faneuil Hall – Boston, Massachusetts

- 70 samples
- 1882 seeds
  - Pits, nutshell, conifer needles, preserved berries, aquatic plants
- 61 identified species
- Rubus (Raspberry and Blackberry) in 71% of samples
Cross Street – Boston, Massachusetts

• 32 seed types
  • Plum, cherry, bramble (raspberry/blackberry), smartweed, and chenopodium
Old World History of Raspberry Cultivation

• Raspberries consumed by Greek gods in myths
  • Retrieved from Mount Ida – *Rubus idaeus*
• Romans cultivated raspberries around 4\textsuperscript{th} century
  • Raspberries recovered from castles around that area
  • Neither wild, nor modern domesticated genotype
• In North America, widely cultivated by 19\textsuperscript{th} century
Research Question

• Would the seeds from recovered from the privy on MSU’s campus germinate after nearly 150 years in night soil?
Methods
Results
Discussion