

RASPBERRIES



Raspberries are one of the easiest fruits to grow and one of the quickest for you to reap your garden rewards from.

ENJOYING THE FRUIT

Raspberries are delicious fresh off the vine or cooked into jams or desserts. They also freeze well. Because they are so perishable, it's best to wait to wash them until just before eating.

These small morsels pack a lot of nutrition into a tiny package. Raspberries are one of the lowest-sugar fruits you can eat. They also are an excellent source of vitamin C and antioxidants, which are plant compounds known to reduce or prevent cell damage that leads to many diseases.

Raspberry leaf tea has been used for centuries to support female reproductive health, among other uses.



CHOOSING A SITE

Raspberries need full sun. They grow best in moderately acid to neutral soil, 5.5–6.5 pH that is about 5% organic matter. They like soil that is consistently moist but well drained; too wet will not work.

Don't plant raspberries where potatoes, tomatoes, peppers, eggplant (plants in the nightshade family), or strawberries have recently been grown, because these crops carry *Verticillium* fungi, a root rot fungus that can infect brambles. Also avoid planting raspberries near any wild raspberries or blackberries, which harbor insects and viruses that can spread to cultivated plants.

PLANTING

Dig an 8-inch-deep and 15-foot-long trench and set aside the good dirt. Work in one large wheelbarrow load of compost, 1 quart of bone meal, and some lime (the amount depends on your soil pH, so have your soil tested before you plant).

Then remake the trench so it's 3–4 inches deep. Lay the roots horizontally with stems pointing up. Place one plant every 16–24 inches.

Cover the roots with 2 inches of soil—not too deep, or they won't send up new shoots. Don't fertilize when you're planting. Mulch with 3–6 inches of straw, pine needles, shavings, or wood chips to retain moisture. Water well.

Trellising keeps the plants upright, off the ground, cleaner, and easier to pick. It enhances good air circulation, which discourages disease. Add a post every 10 inches, with a horizontal cross bar at 18 inches off the ground. Attach each cane to the wire with twine.

TAKING CARE: WATERING, FEEDING, PRUNING

In the first year, give 1 inch of water each week. The shallow roots are poor at competing for nutrients and water, so lay down soaker hose or drip tape and then mulch over that. Water thoroughly weekly if there is no rain when the plants are flowering and in fruit.

Raspberries aren't heavy feeders. If you spread a 1 inch of compost around the base of the plants each spring and spray the foliage every few weeks with plant compost tea that includes fish emulsion, you should be providing ample nutrients and protecting against disease.

Don't let the canes get crowded; you want to keep rows at 24 inches wide. Pruning will be the most time-consuming task with raspberries, as they can get crowded quickly. They will send out suckers in all directions, so thin aggressively every year.

For summer-bearing plants, the target is to have 5 strong canes per foot in a row. Cut back canes that produced fruit that season, either in winter or when they are done producing. For fall-bearing plants, thin to 7 canes per foot. In winter, cut all the growth as close to the ground as possible. Burn the cuttings (don't compost them or leave them in place) in case they harbor disease. You will be taking out a lot of canes, but your ruthless pruning will be rewarded with healthy, abundant raspberries.

AVOIDING PESTS AND DISEASE

One insect of concern is the Spotted Wing Drosophila, a vinegar fly, like a fruit fly, that is attracted to the fruit. Place hummingbird feeders every 10 feet, and the birds will eat the flies. A few diseases can affect raspberry plants, and your best defense is aggressive pruning to enhance air circulation.

HARVESTING

Summer-bearing varieties will fruit in late June through July, while fall-bearing types give you a crop mid-August through September). Chill berries to 33° F immediately after picking.

To keep plants healthy, harvest fruit frequently and completely. Pick all the ripe and overripe berries daily (try not to miss a day) to minimize establishment of Spotted Wing Drosophila.

CONSIDERING SPECIFIC VARIETIES

Raspberries have two main types. The *summer-bearing plants*, *Floricanes*, are perennials that bear fruit on second-year canes that survive the winter. So it takes two years to get raspberries from a cane. The *fall-bearing plants*, *Primocanes*, are also perennials but bear fruit on first-year canes, completing its growing cycle in one year. It flowers and fruits from the tip down.

Raspberries can be red or black. Red raspberries like it cooler in summer and can withstand -20° F in winter. Black raspberries like it hot in summer and die back at -5° F in winter. Both have chilling requirements and so need a dormant period over the winter. Here are a few varieties to try:

CAROLINA

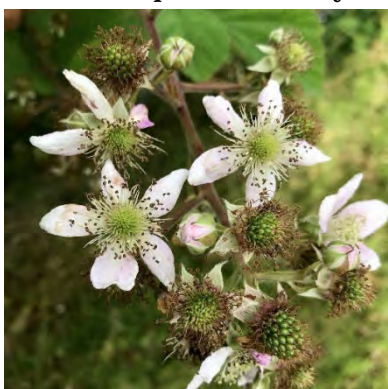
This is our favorite. It produces huge crops of large, firm raspberries with excellent flavor. The fall-bearing (ever-bearing) and self-pollinating primocane bears fruit mid-August through frost.

POLKA

Vigorous and productive, it has a more upright growing habit than other types. The berries are large, firm, and tasty. They don't darken as much as other varieties and hold their shape well.

HERITAGE

Another favorite for its flavor, firmness, and fruit size. This bush has two harvest seasons: a moderate yield in July and heavy yield from September to frost. Self-fertile, it spreads fast and produces a crop in the first year. The canes are fairly upright.



sprout@resroots.org



www.resroots.org



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