

Raspberry (*Rubus* spp.) and Thornless Blackberry (*Rubus fruticosus*)



Exposure: Full sun to light shade,

Raspberry – Zones 3 - 8. In hot areas, raspberries appreciate afternoon shade.

Thornless blackberries – Zones 5 - 9.

Soil: Average to moist, rich, well-drained garden soil. Prefers acidic to circumneutral garden soil.

Growth habits:

Raspberry: Spreading brambles that develop sprawling semi-woody canes to 6 feet. Everbearing/fall varieties, such as 'Caroline,' 'Autumn Britten,' 'Heritage,' 'Anne,' and 'Fall Gold' produce two crops a year: mid-summer and fall. The same canes produce berries in the fall and again in the next spring. Black raspberries produce a single crop in summer.

Thornless blackberry: Easy-to-grow herbaceous perennial brambles. Trailing varieties, such as 'Triple Crown', are vining and need a trellis. Upright varieties, such as 'Apache' and 'Ouachita,' can be grown without a trellis. Blackberries flower late, on the previous season's growth, thus avoiding late frost damage, and fruit in mid to late summer.

Landscape uses:

Raspberries: Raspberries are best planted in trellised beds or along fences to provide support for the canes. Raspberry beds are often located adjacent to vegetable gardens because they have similar soil requirements. They are excellent subjects for berry farming. Raspberry beds will need periodic renovation to maintain their productivity.

Black raspberries: Black raspberries are juglone-tolerant and can produce with less sun than most other fruits. This makes them good candidates for growing fruit in these niches.

Thornless blackberries: Upright varieties can be grown singly or in beds. Trailing varieties are best grown in 6-foot tall, two-wire trellised rows on the border of your vegetable garden or along fences.

Edible/Medicinal properties:

Raspberry: Raspberry fruit is delicious and highly nutritious. Raspberries are best fresh, but can be juiced, made into fruit preserves or desserts, frozen or dried. The raspberry leaves have medicinal value.

Thornless blackberry: The new shoots are edible. Blackberry leaf and root tea is astringent and is used for diarrhea, coughs, colds, TB, rheumatism, and as an eyewash. The ripe fruit is very high in available antioxidants and high in Vitamin C, B-complex, and folic acid.

Pollination: Raspberries and blackberries are self fertile.

Caring for your raspberry and blackberry plants

Pruning:

Raspberry: In the summer after the early summer harvest, prune the canes that just fruited back to 1 foot high. Leave the canes that haven't fruited yet -- they will provide the fall crop. Alternatively, you can prune all the canes off in the winter to produce a single crop in the late summer through fall.

Black raspberry: Top all canes to 36" throughout the season to encourage lateral branching. When dormant, remove all dead, damaged, and weak canes. Thin remaining canes to keep the strongest 5-10 canes for each plant. Trim laterals back to 4-7".

Trailing thornless blackberry: In the late winter, prune the plants back to the ground. See the videos on the UPN website for more tips on pruning and maintaining trailing thornless blackberries.

Erect thornless blackberry: Top all canes at 36-42" during the growing season. When dormant, remove all dead, damaged, and weak canes. Thin remaining canes to 10" apart in a row. Trim laterals back to 12-18".

Watering: Raspberries and thornless blackberries need to be watered once or twice a week during their first year. Established plants will produce larger, juicier berries if the plants are watered several times a week during the fruiting season.

Fertilization: Brambles have most of their roots in the top 18 inches of soil, making fertility management an important part of the maintenance of the plants. Brambles benefit from receiving fertilization the first year they are planted, and each spring after that.

Frequently asked questions about brambles

The leaves on the top of my blackberry plant are all curled. What should I do?

This is caused by the blackberry psyllid, an insect that overwinters in conifers and moves to blackberries in the spring to lay its eggs. Prune off the top of the plant to at least 6 inches below the start of the damage. Dispose of the cut-off piece in a way that kills the insects.

The back side of my blackberry or black raspberry leaves have a bunch of little orange spots. What's this?

This is a form of rust, which is a fungus. It doesn't have an alternate host and is systematic within the host. There is not a viable treatment, so remove infected plants as they appear in spring to avoid spreading the disease.

To minimize the likelihood of the disease, keep black raspberry and blackberry patches thinned and weeds down to improve air flow. Also remove wild blackberry patches nearby that could be infected.

Additional information

See the Useful Plants Nursery website at www.usefulplants.org for videos demonstrating planting and other plant care techniques.