



Raspberries

Raspberries are one of the most commonly grown backyard fruits and for good reason; they are relatively easy to grow and produce fairly quickly after planting. A modestly sized patch can provide fresh berries in season and some to store away for winter goodies. Here in the Flathead we are able to grow red, black and yellow raspberries.

Select a site for your raspberry patch that gets good, full sun for at least 6 hours every day. Your site should also be where you can get water to it and have good drainage. Stay away from low spots in the garden where water collects in spring. Raspberries grow tall enough to provide good screening and can be used that way.

As few as 1 dozen plants can supply enough fruit for a family of four as your raspberry patch matures. Each plant needs about 2 square feet of space so compute your bed size based on this measurement. One dozen plants make two very well spaced 12 foot rows with six canes in each. Raspberries send up new canes in the growing season and this is how your bed becomes fuller and larger. You will prune out old canes each season and let new canes produce fruit each year.

Weed control is very important for growing good fruit. Start by getting rid of all weeds before you start tilling or amending the soil. You can make pulling weeds easier if you make sure the ground is well soaked. Chemical weed killer can also be used but wait two weeks before planting the raspberry canes. Raised beds are not a good choice for raspberries although you may want to use a border to contain the plants.

Like all fruiting plants, raspberries are heavy feeders and need to be started in very good soil. Whether you are using native soil or bringing in soil to make a new bed, amend it generously with compost or well rotted manure. This is your once chance to make sure your plants have good soil to spread their roots out in and become well established. You will top dress your bed yearly but this initial planting sets the stage for your success to come.

Raspberry canes are purchased in spring and are typically dormant. One dozen canes will make a nice size bed for most families. Handle the canes carefully after you purchase them. It is important they **DO NOT DRY OUT**. When you get them home, soak the canes in water for at least an hour before planting. If you will be planting them within 24 hours, simply place them in a bucket of water. Plant Land recommends adding a capful of rooting products such as Thrive® to the water to aid root development.

Plant canes 2-3 feet apart and make rows 2-3 feet apart. Plant canes about an inch deeper than the crown (the spot where the stem stops and the roots begin). You can cut off the top 4 inches of each cane to encourage growth. You will not get fruit the first season. Raspberries are biennial. That means they produce fruit on canes they send out the previous year.

You do not prune your raspberries for the first two seasons. The newly planted canes will produce new fruit bearing canes for the next year. You should get fruit in year two. The second year, new canes will come in next to the fruiting canes and these new canes will produce the third year. In the spring of the third year, you prune out the canes that produced fruit the previous year. They are easy to spot; they usually have fruit pods left on them. When a row becomes crowded with too many new canes, you can dig out the plants in spring and thin the row down. You may not have to do this for a few years but at some point you will need to thin the canes.

Raspberries require a support system to grow and produce vigorously. It can be as simple as a post at each end of a row with wire strung out between them to tie canes to. If you put four posts out, two at each end and string the wire so it forms a box you can corral the canes without tying them up. For either system, run wires at 4 feet and 2 feet high to keep canes upright.

Raspberries benefit from heavy watering while they are fruiting and good watering for the remaining season to insure cane growth for the next year. Top-dressing rows with compost or well rotted manure each spring is needed to continue good fruit production. Raspberries like all fruits are heavy feeders. Supplemental feeding is recommended once fruiting has wound down for the season. Slow release fertilizers such as 16-16-16 work very well.

Plant Land 2019 Season Raspberry Selections

Red Raspberries

Canby: This variety was developed in Oregon and introduced in 1953. It is a thorn-less red berry and is a heavy bearer with large, good flavored, firm, juicy berries. This delicious berry is one of the best in the Northwest for freezing, canning, cooking and fresh eating. The canes are vigorous and productive. Canby does show a higher level of virus resistance and aphid immunity but is very sensitive to root rot so good soil drainage is required. **Zone 3**

Yellow Raspberries

Fall Gold: This everbearing raspberry is a golden yellow variety that produces two full crops each year. You will have a spring crop and then a second crop in July-August, right up until a hard frost. The fruit is very sweet and juicy. The firm and extra large conical berries are borne in large clusters. Excellent for all purposes but especially for fresh eating.

Zone 3

Black Raspberries

Munger: This variety resembles regular red raspberry in many ways, but the blue black fruits are firmer and seedier with a distinctive flavor. Plants differ from red raspberries as they do not sucker from the roots. New plants form when arching cane tips root in soil. You can encourage this by bending cane tips over. You do not need to support black raspberries. At the end of the growing season, cut out all weak canes and remove canes that fruited during the current season. In early spring, cut back lateral branches to 10-15 inches on the strong canes and 3-4 inches on the weak ones. Fruit is produced on side shoots from these laterals. **Zone 3.**

Blackberries:

Prime Ark: Early and heavy producer. It is a thorny primocane-bearing blackberry with an erect growing habit. Fruit size is medium-large. Delicious flavor, improved disease resistance and sweet, big, firm blackberries. The berries are succulent, firm and of good size.

If you just love sweet, juicy blackberries, you'll want to include Prime Ark® 45 in your edible garden. This is an excellent variety that produces fruit on last year's canes and on new canes on the tips. The first, heaviest crop comes in June on second-year and you'll usually see a second crop on new primocanes late summer or early fall.

Zone 4.

