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Raspberries for the home garden

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Quick Facts

Of all bramble fruits, only red and yellow raspberries are recommended for general cultivation in Colorado.

Raspberries differ according to their bearing habits—summer-bearing types produce on biennial canes, and fall-bearing types produce on annual canes.

Fall-bearing raspberries are recommended for Front Range gardeners because of the difficulty in bringing raspberry canes through the winter.

Summer-bearing raspberry varieties may do well on the Western Slope, but fall-fruited varieties are more dependable.

Red raspberries will grow well in most garden soils that are amply supplied with organic matter and are adequately drained.

Only true-to-name, disease-free stock should be planted.

Twenty-five feet (8 meters) of row should produce 15 to 20 pounds (6 to 9 kilograms) of raspberries per year.

A raspberry planting should be relocated every 8 to 10 years, with new, clean stock.

Selected varieties of red and yellow raspberries (*Rubus idaeus*) may be successfully grown in Colorado at elevations up to 8,500 feet (2550 meters). Colorado's climate is not especially favorable for bramble fruit production and only red and yellow raspberries are recommended. Black and purple raspberries as well as blackberries, boysenberries, loganberries and dewberries require special winter protection and are not recommended for growing in Colorado.

Types

There are two types of red raspberries:

summer-bearing and fall-bearing. The standard varieties are biennial summer-bearers that produce canes the first season and bear fruit on short lateral branches of these canes the following summer. Fall-bearing raspberries also produce canes (suckers) from the roots but require no dormant period for fruiting. These canes bear fruit in August and September of the first season. These canes may overwinter and produce a light summer crop, but this is done at the expense of a reduced fall crop.

Varieties

Summer-bearing red raspberries recommended for trial include Latham, Boyne, Newburgh, Canby and Sentinel.

Fall-bearing red raspberries recommended for trial include August Red, Heritage, Fall Red, Fall Gold (yellow-fruited) and September. Pathfinder and Trailblazer are two relatively new varieties that appear to be quite hardy but are not yet commercially available.

Based on Colorado State University tests, fall-bearing types, particularly 'Heritage,' seem best adapted to the Front Range. Both fall-bearing and summer-bearing varieties do well on the Western Slope, but fall-bearing varieties are easier to manage.

Soil Preparation

Red raspberries will grow in most garden soils provided they are amply supplied with organic matter and are adequately drained. If summer-bearing raspberries are to be planted on a good garden soil, only a maintenance amount of fertilizer need be applied consisting of 4 pounds (1.8 kilograms) of ammonium sulfate and 2 pounds (.9 kg) of treble superphosphate per 1,000 square feet (90 square meters). However, if the soil has not produced a good garden it may be well to have the soil tested before planting. If this is not done one may apply 8 pounds (3.6 kg) of ammonium sulfate and 4 pounds (1.8 kg) of treble superphosphate, 1 pound (.5 kg) of zinc sulfate, 1 pound (.5 kg) of iron chelate and 10 bushels (.4 cubic meter) of organic matter per 1,000 square feet (90 sq. m). These amendments should be

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worked in before planting. If fall-bearers are grown, the amounts of fertilizer should be increased by 50 percent.

Fertility should be maintained with a spring application of 4 pounds (1.8 kg) of ammonium sulfate and 2 pounds (.9 kg) of treble super phosphate per 1,000 square feet (90 sq m) scattered among the canes and cultivated into the soil.

Raspberries should receive enough water to maintain a moderate moisture level in their root zone. Water should be withheld after the first frost to help harden off the plants. A late November watering will help prevent winter desiccation.

Planting Raspberries

Red raspberries are commercially propagated by rooted suckers. Generally these are planted in the spring, 2 to 3 feet (.6-.9 m) apart in rows 5 to 10 feet (1.5-3 m) apart depending on the width of the cultivating equipment. After planting, the tops are cut to within 4 to 6 inches (10-15 centimeters) of the ground. Care must be taken at planting if bare-rooted plants are used as they are somewhat difficult to establish. Soaking bareroot plants in a bucket of water 5 hours to overnight will aid in establishment. After a year or two, suckers will fill in the row to form a hedge of canes. The suckers should be thinned to 6 inches (15 cm) and the hedge row should not be over 2 feet (.6 m) wide at ground level.

Trellising

Fall-bearing raspberries seldom require trellising; however, summer-bearing varieties may require some kind of support. Support usually is provided by stretching a wire on either side of the hedge row, 3 feet (.9 m) above the ground. This wire will confine the canes to the hedge row; however, to make them stand erect it may be necessary to tie the canes to the wire with soft twine. See Figure 1.

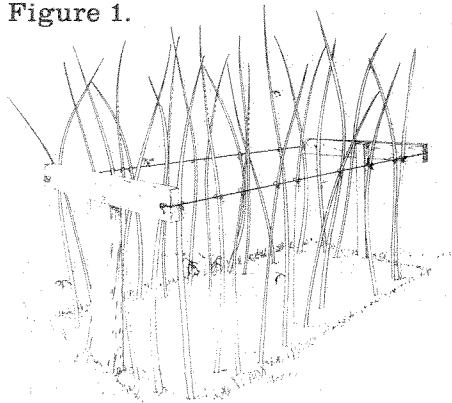


Figure 1: Raspberry trellis with dormant canes secured to wires.

Pruning

The canes of summer-bearing varieties are removed by cutting them off at the ground after they have borne fruit. These canes are disposed of since they often harbor insects and disease. In the spring, the dead, weak and small canes are removed leaving canes no closer than 6 inches (15 cm) apart in the hedge row. Winter-killed tips of the remaining canes are removed.

The canes of fall-bearing varieties generally are mowed off at ground level after the fall

harvest.

Winter Protection

To obtain a crop of summer-bearing red raspberries in most areas of Colorado, the canes must be protected during the winter. This generally is done by laying the canes down in one direction and holding them in place with a shovel full of soil on their tips, sometime after November 1. They are further covered by plowing or shoveling a shallow furrow along side of each row and rolling the soil over the canes. In early April a pitchfork is used to lift the canes out of the soil, and the soil used to cover the canes is pulled back into the furrow.

The advantage of fall-bearing varieties is that the winter covering operation is obviated by the fact that the canes are mowed off after harvest. However, if a summer crop is desired from these canes, they must be protected as described for summer-bearing raspberries.

Yield

A 25-foot (8-meter) hedge row of red raspberries should yield 15 to 20 pounds (6-9 kg) of fruit per year under optimum conditions. This level of productivity should be reached in the third year. After this, productivity will decline and after 8 to 10 years, the bed should be relocated starting with new stock.

Disease and Insects

Raspberries are affected by a wide range of diseases and insects as are most cultivated plants. However, the gardener can avoid most of these problems for several years if only quality, true-to-name, disease-free raspberry varieties are purchased. It is almost sure, however, that during hot, dry weather, raspberries along the Front Range will be infested with spider mites. The mites themselves are not obvious, but their presence is indicated by tiny yellow spots on the leaves that eventually turn brown. The mites, which are feeding on the underside of the leaves, should be sprayed with 1 tablespoon (15 milliliters) of Diazinon 50-percent wettable powder or 1 teaspoon (5 ml) of malathion 57-percent emulsifiable concentrate per gallon (3.8 liters) of water. The required waiting period between spraying and harvesting, as stated on the label, should be observed.

Raspberry caneborers have been reported in Colorado. They are a serious pest which is evident in a sudden wilting and drooping of tops of canes. The white larvae of the borer, if left uncontrolled, burrows down through the cane killing it. Control may be achieved through the removal of the infested canes at the first sign of an infestation. Sevin as well as other insecticides applied before blossoms open will control this insect. Follow directions on the label in applying any insecticide.

References

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