

# Blackberries



**Cultural Requirements:** Blackberries will thrive on most soil types, but good drainage is desirable with most varieties. Soils that are naturally fertile, easily worked, and of good moisture holding capacity are the most suitable. For areas with poor soil conditions 8 inch raised beds are a must. While not as cold hardy as the raspberry, many varieties of blackberries are known to do well in middle areas east of the cascades.

**Fertility:** Blackberries respond extremely well to balanced commercial blends of fertilizer applied at blossoming time. Blackberries also thrive on organic fertilizers such as barn yard manure. 22 ounces of a 10-10-10 fertilizer per 10 square feet of ground is optimum for the established planting. Apply 11 ounces after growth starts in the spring and another 11 ounces 6 weeks later.

Good soil moisture should be maintained by irrigation at least for the first year after planting, and fruit production will benefit if irrigation is practiced up until the fall rains in following years.

**Planting Instructions:** One year old tips should be planted in March or April. Two year old transplants maybe planted earlier. Plant the transplants at about the same depth the plant grew at the nursery, covering any white sprouts arising from the crown. Avoid wadding the roots in the planting hole, pruning them back if necessary. Avoid pruning of roots on thornless varieties as they may give rise to thorny suckers if so treated.

**Pruning and Training:** As the new canes begin growing along the ground in the Spring, they may be moved in alongside the row from time to time to keep them out of harms way until they are ready to be trained. These canes will not bear fruit until the following summer when they are two years old. After harvest, the two year old fruiting canes are removed as close to the ground as possible without injuring the new canes.

In mild climates like the Willamette Valley, many of the hardier varieties may be trained to stakes or trellises in late summer or early fall after the fruiting canes have been removed. The one year old canes are easier to handle in the fall as opposed to the following spring, and if trained well ahead of the first hard frost, they will mature better than canes left to lie on the ground through the winter. The Thornless Evergreen is an exception as it is harvested late and must be spring trained.

In cold climates, Spring training is a must as canes left on the ground over winter are less apt to be damaged by cold. The ideal time to spring train is after the danger of freezing weather and before the leaf buds begin expanding. Straw mulch is often used for winter protection in clod , dry climates.

Several systems are used in training trailing blackberries. The simplest for the home gardener is a stake with a cross arm about five feet high. Canes should be brought up either directly from the ground or spiraled around the stake and held in place with two or three ties of strong twine. Twine may not be necessary if canes are looped over the cross arm and the ends twined into the canes below.

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Various innovative methods of training are used with wire trellises. The most common trellis has two wires, one five feet high and the other three feet high. The canes to be trained are divided into two parts, and each taken separately to the top wire, and then the canes are brought down to the lower wire and turned back toward the plant with one or two twists. Excess cane length can be removed.

