

RASPBERRIES IN THE HOME GARDEN

E. B. Poling, Extension Horticultural Specialist

Homeowners frequently overlook the possibilities for growing raspberries. This fruit is often scarce in local markets, and homeowners may have to grow them or do without! This fruit is relatively easy to grow (except in the coastal plain), and they need relatively few sprays for pest control.

Types to Grow

Raspberries: Red raspberries are better suited to the mountains of Western North Carolina. (Table 1).

Table 1. Raspberries for North Carolina

Variety	Season	Yield	Size	Flavor	Remarks
Red Varieties					
Dormanred	Late	High	Large	Fair	Trailing, adaptable to coastal plain.
Heritage	Everbearing	High	Medium	Very good	Both spring and fall crop.
Titan	Mid	High	Large	Very good	Trial use suggested.
Black Varieties					
Allen	Early to mid	Medium	Large	Good	All-around variety.
Bristol	Mid	Medium	Large	Good	Anthraxose susceptible.
Cumberland	Mid	High	Large	Excellent	Firm berry, hardy.

Soil Testing and Planting

It is best to test the soil four to six months before planting to allow adequate time to amend the soil based on test results. If the pH is too low, raise it to the level suggested by the soil test with dolomitic lime.

Keep plant roots moist until planting time by either heeling them into the ground temporarily or wrapping them in wet burlap. Do not leave the roots exposed to the drying effects of sun and air.

Prepare a planting hole large enough to allow the roots to spread out naturally. Do not prune the roots except to remove damaged ones. Set plants at the same depth they were planted in the nursery. The crown (the point where the stem and root merge) should be one inch below ground level; tissue culture plants at ground level.

Distributed in furtherance of the Acts of Congress of May 8 and June 30, 1914. Employment and program opportunities are offered to all people regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability. North Carolina State University, North Carolina A&T State University, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and local governments cooperating.



After planting, tamp the soil firmly to remove air pockets around the roots. Water all new plantings well, immediately after planting.

Fertilization, Irrigation, Cultivation, and Mulching

Raspberries: Before planting, spade or till into the bed 1 pound of 10-10-10 fertilizer per hundred square feet of soil. Cultivate by hand and hoe between rows to a depth of 1 to 2 inches to prevent suckers from taking hold. Mulch with lawn clippings, pine straw, or pine bark.

Fertilize just after new growth starts in the spring (May) with a 10-10-10 commercial mix at a rate of 5 pounds per hundred feet of row. Repeat in July with another 2 to 3 pounds per hundred feet of row if vigor is low. In subsequent years, apply 8 pounds per hundred feet of row in March and repeat in May. Spread the fertilizer uniformly in a foot-wide band over the row, or sidedress with one-half the recommended amount of fertilizer on each side of the row.

Training and Pruning

Raspberries: Red raspberries tend to sucker and spread. As most of their fruit production is concentrated in the top one-third of new shoot growth, it is not advisable to prune them into a hedgerow as you would with blackberries. Instead, they should be trellised.

Train Dormanred to a vertical trellis with a narrow wall of foliage. Space posts 20 feet apart and attach wires at a 5-foot height (Figure 1). For the Heritage variety, use a crossbar or horizontal trellising system. Two-foot crossarms are attached to the posts at a height of about 4 feet, and two wires are secured at the ends of the arms (Figure 2). The new canes will grow between and be supported by the wires with a minimum of tying. Remove first-season blooms to help plants get established and increase vegetative growth. Do not attempt to produce a crop the first season.

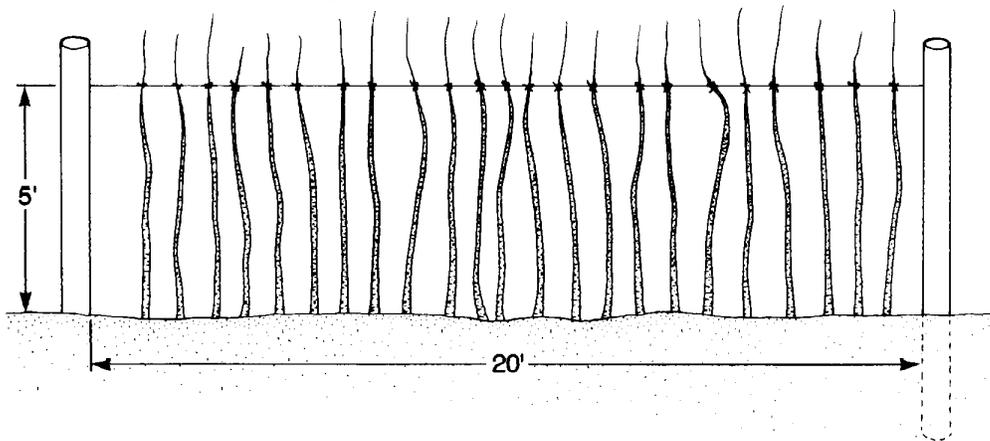


Figure 1. Red raspberry trellis for Dormanred variety. Wires are set at 5 feet above the ground. Treated posts are spaced 20 feet apart and set at least 24 inches into the ground.

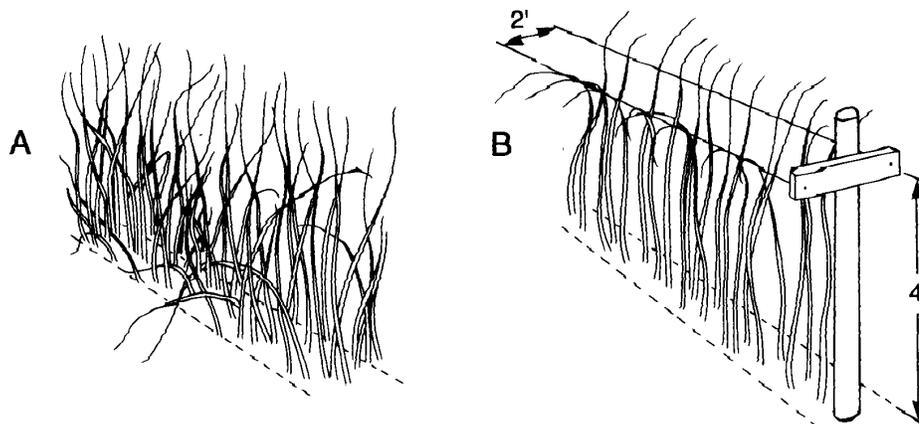


Figure 2. Heritage variety raspberries may be allowed to grow untrellised (A), but crossbar trellising (B) is recommended. Set crossbars to space the wires 18 to 24 inches apart and about 4 feet above the ground.

During late February, thin the canes to 4 to 6 inches apart over the width. Be sure to select healthy canes and remove weaker ones. After the harvest in summer, remove all canes that fruited to allow better growth of new season shoots and to prevent disease. Make cuts close to the ground. It is preferable to thin new shoots in mid-summer, leaving three to four canes per foot of row. For Dormanred, tie the new shoots loosely to the trellis.

Black raspberries do not need to be trellised at all. They are treated much the same as erect blackberries. Summer prune by pinching back in June when new shoots reach 18 to 24 inches. It is sometimes necessary to do this a number of times, as not all shoots will be tall enough for pinching on the same date. Terminal (end) growth stops when shoots are pinched back, but the three to five buds below the pinched area develop vigorous lateral growth. This allows the canes to become self-supporting.

After harvest, remove canes that have just fruited. In winter before growth starts, cut back side branches, leaving two to six buds (8 to 12 inches long) per cane. Remove very small canes (Figure 3).



Figure 3. Black raspberry plant (A) before and (B) after dormant season pruning.

Harvesting

Harvest twice a week when fully ripe. Pick in the morning when the air is cool and berries are firm.

Weed Control, Cultivation and Mulching

Keep plants in rows free of weeds by hand weeding, hoeing and cultivation or with a mulch. Raspberries may be grown under clean cultivation, sod or permanent mulch. The author prefers the mulch. The average homeowner has many organic residues around the home such as lawn clippings, leaves, or shredded vegetation. A raspberry planting is an ideal place to use these materials.

If you grow raspberries under clean cultivation, the area between rows is cultivated to a depth of 1 to 2 inches at intervals of 2 weeks from early spring to end of harvest. This controls weeds and red raspberry suckers in the row. If you use sod culture, mow the area between one row like a lawn throughout the summer to control growth of weeds, grasses and suckers. Where a permanent mulch is used, mow at timely intervals to control raspberry suckers between the rows.

Highest yields will likely be obtained with permanent mulch. Clean cultivation is next highest yield, and sod usually results in the lowest yield, but is easy to maintain for a homeowner.

Winter Protection

In colder regions of the state it is quite likely that the canes and buds of Dormanred will be winter injured if left up in the air in an exposed condition. In late fall untie canes from the trellis wires or stakes and lay them on the ground before the ground freezes to protect them from winter injury. Covering the canes with mulch should not be necessary.

Watering

Plants need about 1 inch of water a week from bloom time to end of harvest. Plants should also be watered during prolonged dry periods after harvest as well. When watering, add enough water to wet the soil to a depth of 6 to 8 inches.

Diseases and Insects

Many insects and diseases damage raspberries. You can avoid many pest problems by:

1. Planting only quality nursery stock.
2. Keeping plants well spaced with a narrow wall of foliage well exposed to light.
3. Removing diseased or sick plants and all canes that have fruited, either burning them or removing them.
4. Replanting with quality stock every 5-7 years.
5. Removing wild brambles in vicinity of your garden.
6. Keeping red and black raspberries separated by 700 feet.

Contact your Cooperative Extension Agent for current recommended spray programs or refer to your North Carolina Agricultural Chemicals Manual.