

## **Blackberries and Raspberries:**

### **Delicious Eating Right from Your Garden**

While most gardens are still sleeping, many gardeners (and would-be gardeners) are dreaming of fresh fruit growing abundantly in their own gardens. They dream, but don't believe they could actually grow fruit - so many don't even try. While it's true that most fruits are difficult to grow in Oklahoma, berries could make fruit-lover's dreams come true.

Blackberries, for instance, are one of the easiest to grow and most dependable producers in Oklahoma. For those that are willing to put in the additional effort, growing raspberries (and blackberry-raspberry hybrids) is another option for producing fruit in an Oklahoma garden.

This article is intended to provide the basic information gardeners need to successfully select varieties, grow and harvest berries. Those looking for additional information can refer to OSU Extension Fact Sheet [HLA-6215](#) (Blackberry and Raspberry Culture for the Home Garden).



*Source – Article by Hannah Williams @ [bbcgoodfood.com](#)*

## **Blackberries**

### **Selecting blackberry plants**

There are many varieties of blackberries and selecting the right blackberry plant for your garden is important. Some important facts:

- Blackberries grow either as a small shrub or vine depending on whether the variety has an erect, semi-erect, or trailing growth habit.
  - Semi-erect and trailing blackberries require trellises
  - Erect blackberries are recommended as they do not require trellises and require less work to maintain

- Most blackberry cultivars are self-pollinating; however, the fruit quality and crop yields tend to improve with cross-pollination. It is wise to always check the pollination requirements for any fruiting plant variety and, in the case of blackberries, the time of bloom for the different varieties must coincide to ensure successful cross pollination.
- Selection of several varieties can extend the harvest season considerably
- Many varieties have been known to produce crops for 15 years if they are properly maintained and irrigated
- Many good varieties of **erect, thorn-less blackberries** have been released by researchers in Arkansas. These seem well adapted to Oklahoma conditions. They include:

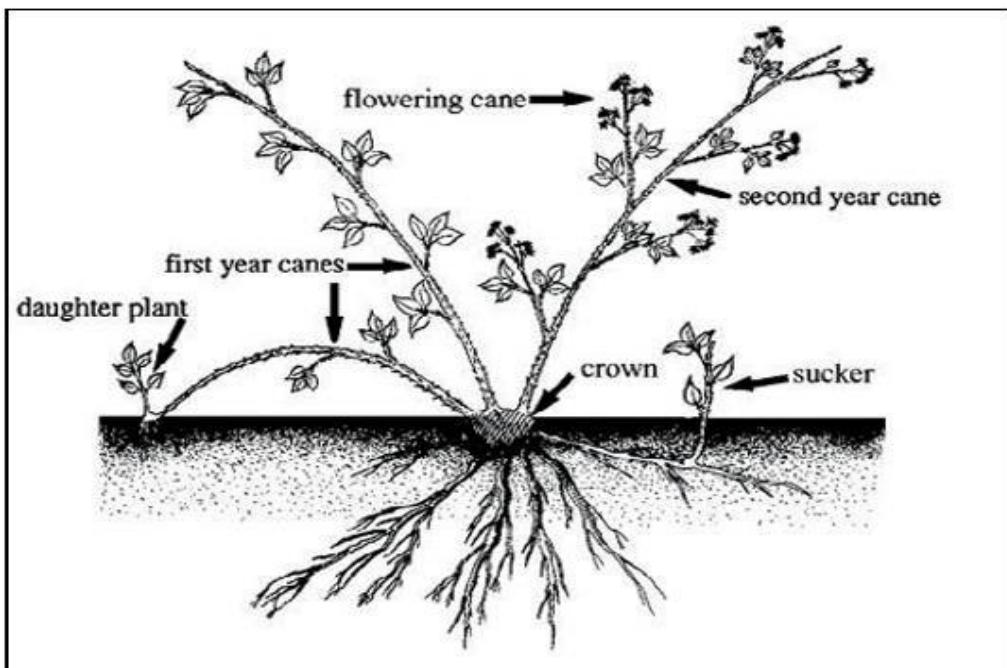
Variety	Description (all are erect & thorn-less)	Disease Resistance	Ripe Date
Apache	high yields of large fruit, which have longer storage potential than most blackberries	resistant to orange rust, double blossom and anthracnose	late June to early August
Arapaho	medium sized, firm, and flavorful fruit	shows some resistance to double blossom/rosette and anthracnose	early June
Navaho	large, firm and sweet fruit	moderately resistant to anthracnose, but is susceptible to orange rust and double blossom	mid- to late June
Osage	medium sized fruit with good flavor, texture, aroma, and high yields. It also stores well	moderately resistant anthracnose and orange rust	early June
Ouachita	firm, average-size fruit, which have longer storage potential than most blackberries	resistant to orange rust, double blossom and anthracnose.	early to mid-July

- Several other blackberry varieties also do well in Oklahoma:

Cherokee (thorny, erect)	Chickasaw (thorny, erect)	Natchez (thorn-less, semi-erect)
Cheyenne (thorny, erect)	Choctaw, (thorny, erect)	Shawnee (thorny, erect)

Note: The varieties listed above are not the only varieties that can be grown in Oklahoma.

One distinctive characteristic of blackberries is that, while they have a perennial root system, they have a biennial stems (called canes). Because of this attribute, most blackberries produce fruit on canes that began growing the previous year (floricanes). This means these varieties of blackberries will not produce fruit the first year. The primocanes (current year canes) will grow the first year, but will not fruit. During the second and subsequent years, the second-year canes (now called floricanes) will bear fruit while the new canes that will produce berries the next year.



Source: NSW Weed Wise /University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture

In contrast, primocane-fruiting blackberries will bear fruit the first year until the top of the fruiting cane (primocanes) are killed by cold weather. These canes (now called floricanes), will flower and fruit again the following spring. Examples of this type of blackberry are: Prime-Jim (thorny, erect), Prime-Jan (thorny, erect), Prime Ark-45 (thorny, erect), and Prime Ark Freedom (thorn-less, erect).

## Planning for and Planting blackberry plants

- Cultivated blackberries grow best on sandy loam soils with added organic matter but will tolerate a wide range of soil types as long as the soil is well-drained. For wet areas or heavy clay soils, raised beds are recommended.
- Blackberries prefer soil with a pH of 5.5 to 6.5 which is slightly acidic
- The suggested location for planting blackberries is an area with a slight, north-facing slope to help prevent spring frost injury and to protect plants from southwest winds during the summer months. This area should provide the berries with at least six to eight hours of sun each day.
- While planting is usually completed during February and March, planting can be done at any time during the dormant season
- Having the soil tested is recommended to determine what amendments and nutrients should be added to the soil to prepare it for the new plants. [Click here](#) to view instructions for taking a soil sample for analysis at the OSU Extension Center.
- Good weed control is important for the survival of first year plants. Therefore, any evasive plants or highly competitive perennial grasses (such as Bermuda grass) should be eradicated prior to planting.
- Plant the blackberries in previously prepared soil at the same depth used at the nursery, spacing the plants three to four feet apart. Once the blackberries have been planted, water the plants thoroughly.

## Caring for blackberry plants

- Irrigation of first year plants is critical for plant survival, especially in western and central Oklahoma. Blackberries need one to two inches of water per week during the growing season. This moisture can be provided via rainfall, irrigation or a combination of both. A drip irrigation system is an ideal method for watering blackberries. Remember that the amount of water provided weekly is very important as too little water decreases crop yield, plant health, and berry quality while excess water can cause roots to die.
- The OSU Extension Service recommends that blackberries should be fertilized at bloom time “to stimulate plant growth, increase berry size and boost total production. A second application of fertilizer should be made following fruit harvest to stimulate vigorous cane growth for next season’s production.”<sup>1</sup>
- Pruning is important. Remove just the tips of first-year canes (primocanes) to encourage branching, promote plant growth and increase fruit yield the following year. Blackberry plants should also be pruned each fall by cutting out the grayish floricanes near the crown of the plant. Removing any pruned canes from the garden will decrease insect and disease problems.

- For semi-erect and trailing blackberry plants, trellis should be used. For additional information on setting up and using trellises, refer to [Blackberry and Raspberry Culture for the Home Garden \(HLA 6215\)](#)
- “Blackberries should be permanently mulched with about 4 inches of organic material such as pine bark, rice hulls or wheat straw”<sup>2</sup> to help control weeds and promote the growth of the plants root system. In addition, the mulch protects the soil, conserves moisture, and prevents winter injury to crowns. It is recommended to replenish the mulch each fall after the first killing frost.
- According to the University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service “blackberries can be grown with little to no pesticide use in the home garden”. However, this does not mean that pesticides will never be needed. If insect or disease issues arise, spraying may be required. For current pesticide recommendations, contact the local county extension office or view information online at <http://www.tulsamastergardeners.org/index.html> .

## **Raspberries and Blackberry/Raspberry Hybrids**



Source - “Raspberries for the home garden” article – University of Minnesota Extension

Raspberries are delicious and can be grown in Oklahoma. These berries, however, require additional care and are not generally recommended by the OSU Extension Service. Raspberries are not generally tolerant of Oklahoma summers and fruit quality and crop yields are generally poor due to spring freezes.

Raspberries and blackberries both belong to an extensive group of fruits known as brambles. Therefore, most of the information provided (in this article) for growing trellised blackberries applies to raspberries and raspberry hybrids. The main difference is that raspberries are heat intolerant and efforts need to be made to reduce heat stress on these plants. Suggestions for reducing heat stress include: 1) use of a 50% shade cloth and 2) placing plants next to a building or tree line, which will help block the afternoon sun.

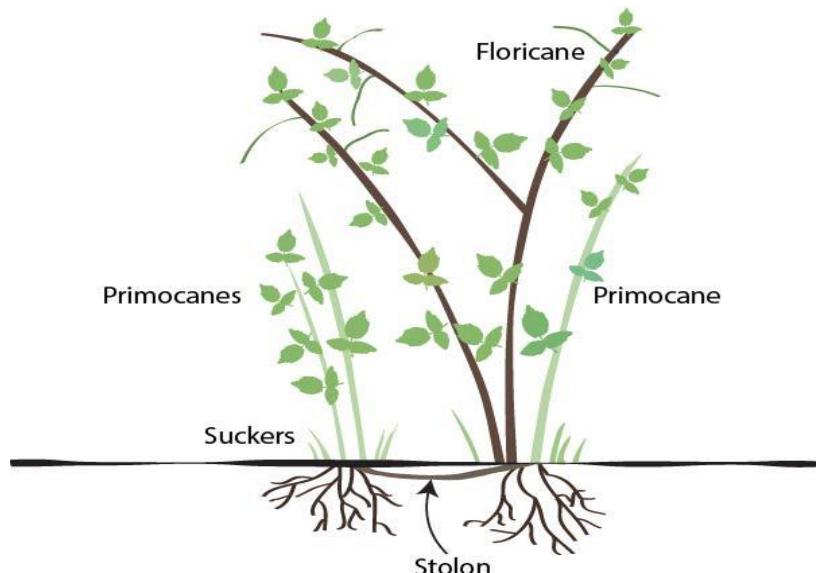


Illustration by Emily S. Tepe

The three main types of raspberries grown in the home garden are red, black, and purple. According to the University Of Minnesota Extension Center, raspberries that are yellow in color are a variety of red raspberries that do not produce red pigment. Raspberries come in both primocane and floricane fruiting varieties and can be erect, semi-erect or trailing. OSU Extension Service Fact Sheet [HLA-6215](#), suggests the follow varieties to grow experimentally in Oklahoma: Anne, Autumn Bliss, Boyne, Caroline, Cumberland, Dorman Red, Fall Gold, Heritage, Jaclyn, Jewel, Joan J, Josephine, Magana, Nantahala, Nova and Polka.

It is interesting to note that black raspberries look similar to blackberries and are sometimes confused. One way to tell the difference is that a blackberry is shinier and bigger than the black raspberry. In addition, the top of the blackberry appears closed while the top of a black raspberry appears open or hollow, which is why farmers often call black raspberries "blackcaps". Also, black raspberries are more anti-oxidant dense than the blackberry. If you want to check out the nutritional difference, read this article ([Blackberries and Black](#)

Raspberries—Not the Same!) on the Ohio State University Extension Family and Consumer Sciences website.

## **Hybrids**

There are several varieties of blackberry-raspberry hybrids. These berries have trailing habits and must be trellised. The following list of hybrids is provided directly from “Blackberry and Raspberry Culture for the Home Garden (OSU factsheet [HLA-6215](#))”:

**“Boysenberry**—the berries are large, strongly flavored, soft, and medium to late maturing. When disease free plants are used, Boysenberries may produce well for 4 to 6 years. One selection is thorn-less and the other has very small thorns.

**Dewberry**—dewberries ripen early in the season, just ahead of several of the true blackberries. The berries are medium-large, medium-firm and of good flavor. Plants are moderately vigorous and productive. Dewberries are somewhat more winter hardy than Boysenberries.

**Youngberry**—the berries are dark wine colored, large, sweet, and soft when ripe. They are not as flavorful as Boysenberries. The plants have small thorns, and are vigorous and moderately productive. Youngberries ripen somewhat earlier than Boysenberries.”<sup>4</sup>

## **Quotations:**

<sup>1</sup> Blackberry and Raspberry Culture for the Home Garden (OSU factsheet HLA 6215) Fertilizing Section, Page 3

<sup>2</sup> Blackberry and Raspberry Culture for the Home Garden (OSU factsheet HLA 6215) General Care Section, Page 3

<sup>3</sup> Small Fruit Fertilization and Maintenance Schedule (OSU Factsheet HILA-6259), Page 1

<sup>4</sup> Blackberry and Raspberry Culture for the Home Garden (OSU factsheet HLA 6215) Hybrids Section, Page 2

## **Additional References:**

1) Blackberry and Raspberry Culture for the Home Garden (OSU factsheet HLA 6215)

2) “Ask a Master Gardener: Growing raspberries and blackberries takes planning”;  
Tulsa World; Bill Sevier, Jan 14, 2017

[http://www.tulsaworld.com/scene/gardenadvice/master-gardener-growing-raspberries-and-blackberries-takes-planning/article\\_63adb2d5-fd9a-543d-a9ae-4a5a72003906.html](http://www.tulsaworld.com/scene/gardenadvice/master-gardener-growing-raspberries-and-blackberries-takes-planning/article_63adb2d5-fd9a-543d-a9ae-4a5a72003906.html)

3) University of Arkansas website

<https://www.uaex.edu/farm-ranch/crops-commercial-horticulture/docs/Arapaho.pdf>

<https://www.uaex.edu/yard-garden/fruits-nuts/berries.aspx#>

[https://www.uaex.edu/farm-ranch/crops-commercial-horticulture/docs/Prime\\_Freedom.pdf](https://www.uaex.edu/farm-ranch/crops-commercial-horticulture/docs/Prime_Freedom.pdf)

4) Horticultural science website - associated with American Society for Horticulture Science

“Natchez’ Thornless Blackberry”; John R. Clark and James N. Moore; Department of horticulture, University of Arkansas

<http://hortsci.ashpublications.org/content/43/6/1897.full>

“Osage’ Thornless Blackberry”; John R. Clark; Department of horticulture, University of Arkansas

<http://hortsci.ashpublications.org/content/48/7/909.full>  
<http://hortsci.ashpublications.org/content/48/7/909.full>

“‘Prime-Jan’ (‘APF-8’)” and Prime-Jim’ (‘APF-12’) ;Primocane-fruited Blackberries”; John R. Clark, James N. More, and Jose Lopez-Medina - Dept. of Horticulture, University of Arkansas; Chad Finn - U.S. Dept. of Agriculture; Penelope Perkins-Veazie – US Department of Agriculture

<https://www.ars.usda.gov/ARSUserFiles/1718/PDF/2005/Prime-Jan2005.pdf>

5) University of Missouri; “Blackberry Variety Selection”, Amanda McWhirt; Horticulture Science 40(3) Extension Specialist, University of Arkansas

[http://extension.missouri.edu/greene/documents/Horticulture/Blackberry/Blackberry%20Cultivars%20McWhirt%20Nov\\_15%2C2016.pdf](http://extension.missouri.edu/greene/documents/Horticulture/Blackberry/Blackberry%20Cultivars%20McWhirt%20Nov_15%2C2016.pdf)

6) New Mexico State University, “Blackberry Production in New Mexico - Guide H-325”

[http://aces.nmsu.edu/pubs/\\_h/H325/welcome.html](http://aces.nmsu.edu/pubs/_h/H325/welcome.html)

7) “Blackberries, hybrids good choices for Oklahoma”; Ask a Master Gardener; Tulsa World: Brian Jervis; April 3, 2010

[http://www.tulsaworld.com/scene/gardenadvice/blackberries-hybrids-good-choices-for-oklahoma/article\\_483cb7ce-21be-5e87-8e37-a66f4b3de00e.html](http://www.tulsaworld.com/scene/gardenadvice/blackberries-hybrids-good-choices-for-oklahoma/article_483cb7ce-21be-5e87-8e37-a66f4b3de00e.html)

- 8) Small Fruit Fertilization and Maintenance Schedule (OSU Factsheet HILA-6259)
- 9) "Raspberries for the home garden"; Emily S. Tepe and Dr. Emily E. Hoover; University of Minnesota Extension  
<https://www.extension.umn.edu/garden/yard-garden/fruit/raspberries-for-the-home-garden/>
- 10) Live Healthy Live Well / "Blackberries and Black Raspberries—Not the Same!" ; Ohio State University Extension Family and Consumer Sciences  
<https://livehealthysu.com/2017/04/17/blackberries-and-black-raspberries-not-the-same/>
- 11) Master Gardeners Manual (OSU Cooperative Extension Service E-1034) – pages 137 -144  
<http://pods.dasnr.okstate.edu/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-10312/E-1034.pdf>