

Growing and Caring for Caneberries - Raspberries and Blackberries

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Raspberries and blackberries are favorites of home gardeners. They are relatively easy to grow and very productive when cared for properly. This article will provide basic information about caneberries for the home garden.

The first consideration in growing caneberries is site selection. They require full sun, well-drained soil, and soil that has not recently grown strawberries, potatoes, tomatoes, peppers, or eggplants to avoid infection with *Fusarium* wilt. Also, the site needs to be at least 300 feet away from wild caneberries. The wild berries may pose a risk for pest and disease problems.

If planting bareroot canes, the best time is November through March before growth begins. Plug plants and one-year-old transplants can be planted in spring after danger of frost or in early fall if the ground is still warm. The advantage of fall planting is development of a better root system than with spring planting.

Pruning the canes is essential for the best crop. Two terms you need to know when learning about pruning are primocane and floricanes. Primocanes are the first-year canes that are primarily leafy. Floricanes are the same cane in its second year when the berries are produced on it. Because pruning is an ongoing activity with caneberries you may be trimming a primocane or floricanes depending on whether pruning is done at planting, during the growing season, or during the dormant season. Here is the link to the YouTube recording of a class presented by Adam Watson, Agriculture Agent, Washington County UT Extension Office, and shared with his permission, about pruning which includes caneberry pruning:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sstgIKFYshQ>.

Pruning at different times of the year provides different benefits. When done at planting, new primocane growth is encouraged. During the growing season pruning results in lateral branches and manageable height. Prune during the dormant season to remove dead floricanes, remove and thin poor growing canes and encourage fruit production in a more concentrated area. The extent of pruning varies with the time of year, type of caneberry, and type of cane. The references that follow provide details important for the best crop yield and healthiest plants.

Grow your own berries and enjoy the fruits of your labor! There's nothing better than fresh berries for snacks, jams and pies, or frozen berries to enjoy any time!

For important detailed information:

“Selecting Caneberries for Residential Production in Tennessee,”
<https://extension.tennessee.edu/publications/Documents/W895B.pdf>

“Blackberries and Raspberries in Home Gardens,”
<https://extension.tennessee.edu/publications/Documents/SP284-C.pdf>

“Pruning and Training Caneberries – Blackberries and Raspberries,”
<https://extension.tennessee.edu/publications/Documents/SP284-G.pdf>

“Southeast Regional Caneberry Production Guide,” <https://content.ces.ncsu.edu/southeast-regional-caneberry-production-guide>

AAMG Q&A

What is the best time to plant blueberries? Plant blueberries either by mid-October or in spring after risk of severe frost is past. Keep in mind that blueberries require acidic soil (optimally pH 4.5). Therefore, soil testing is important to determine if pH adjustment is needed. More information is available at <https://extension.wvu.edu/lawn-gardening-pests/gardening/gardening-101/growing-blueberries-for-beginners> and <https://extension.tennessee.edu/publications/Documents/W895A.pdf>

How can I make my Montmorency cherry tree grow? The Montmorency cherry tree grows in USDA zones 4-7. It requires 700 hours of temperatures between 32 – 45 degrees F for buds to open in the spring. Flowers occur on 1-year old wood. The tree requires full sun and prefers fertile, well-drained soil. See <https://www.gardenia.net/plant/prunus-cerasus-montmorency> and <https://www.arborday.org/trees/treeGuide/TreeDetail.cfm?ItemID=814> for additional information.

How do you kill briar patches? And wild violets in your yard? Wild blackberries are a source of food and shelter for many animals. The berries are also delicious if you can pick them before the animals do. If, however, you live in an urban area, the berries may attract pests like rats. As with removal of any plant, Integrated Pest Management is recommended. Physically removing the plants is the first option. See “Integrated Pest Management for Home Gardeners and Landscape Professionals” at <https://ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn7434.html> for details.

Wild violets provide an early source of nectar for insects in the spring. Consider leaving the violets if possible. A non-toxic method of decreasing wild violets is to decrease lawn watering and shade, and mow more frequently to help control violet growth and promote dense turf growth. See <https://www.turffiles.ncsu.edu/weeds-in-turf/wild-violet/>.

How do I ask a question?

If you have a question for the Master Gardeners, submit them to us on our website at www.netmga.net. Click the link at the top of the page, “ASK A MASTER GARDENER” to send in your question. Questions that are not answered in this column will receive a response from a Master Gardener to the contact information you provide.