



Brambles

Blackberries, Raspberries, and the 'Austin' Dewberry

Blackberries and dewberries are easy to grow and very productive for the backyard gardener. Raspberries are more of a challenge in our alkaline soil, but may be worth the effort for the raspberry fan.

Blackberries need *at least* 8 hours of full sun. Dewberries need full sun, too, but are more tolerant of some afternoon shade. Raspberries *need* afternoon shade, but give them about 6 hours of full morning sun.

Amend the soil thoroughly before planting, especially for raspberries. Mix in plenty of **Revitalizer Compost** to existing soil, or create a raised bed by using **Lady Bug brand Hill Country Garden Soil**. Raspberries can also be grown in a container, using **Lady Bug Square Foot Garden Blend**. Add **Lady Bug brand Glittering Greensand** to make sure all brambles have enough iron, along with a complete fertilizer such as **Lady Bug 8-2-4** or **Flower Power**. See our handout *Planting and Maintenance Guide for Fruits, Nuts, & Berries* for more information.

Space blackberries and raspberries 3 feet apart; dewberries 5 feet apart. To plant the bramble at the proper depth, allow the first root (coming out of the bottom of the stem) to be at, or slightly above, the soil line.

Dewberries need no pruning, unless you want to train them onto a fence or trellis. Blackberries produce on last year's growth, so expect your first harvest the second year. Harvest when fruit is fully ripe. When the blackberry or dewberry is dark black-purple and soft and releases easily from the stem, then the fruits are ready! At peak production you may need to harvest daily. It may be helpful to use bird netting to protect your harvest. Every year after harvest, cut all old canes (the very ones you just stripped clean of berries) down to ground level. Allow only the vigorous new growth to remain. When these new canes reach 3–4 feet, thin them so that only 5-7 canes per plant remain. At the same time, prune back the canes to 4 feet long to encourage branching, on which the bramble will fruit next year.

In Texas, raspberries are less vigorous than blackberries. According to Richard Ashton in *Texas Gardener* magazine, raspberries can be pruned by a method called "tipping" to delay fruiting until the end of summer. Otherwise, fruiting in midsummer would result in scorched fruit. When the new canes reach 3' high in June, cut one to two inches off of the tips. This promotes lateral branching. In early July, tip all the laterals again. Then, blooming should happen mid-August, with fruiting in late August to early September. Prune all raspberry canes down to 2-3 inches in late February.

Bramble Varieties for Central Texas (Chilling Hours – if available/Thorny or Thornless) – Size of fruit; Ripening time; Fruit quality & flavor; Other qualities & information.

AUSTIN DEWBERRY: (Thorny) Large; Mid-June; Sweet flavorful fruit; Trailing plant; Allow to ramble across the ground, making a 2' – 3' deep tangle, or train them on a trellis; Good fresh and for cooking.

BLACKBERRIES:

Apache (800-900/Thornless) Medium-large; Early July; Sweet and firm fruit; Erect plant; 1999 release from University of Arkansas; Resistant to rosette disease and orange rust.

Brazos (Low Chilling Requirement/Thorny) Large; Mid- to Late-May; Soft fruit with a tart, acidic flavor; Vigorous grower and heavy producer; Disease resistant; Good for cooking; Very widely adapted to most areas of Texas; Has raspberry and wild dewberry in its parentage; Introduced by Texas A&M in 1959.

Kiowa (200-300/Thorny) Very Large; Early June; Flavorful, firm fruit with blocky oblong shape; Erect plant; Fruit good for fresh eating and cooking; Stores and ships well; From the University of Arkansas, 1995.

Natchez (500/Thornless) Large; Early June; Delicious, juicy, flavorful fruits that are elongated in shape; Erect plant; High yields; Released in 2007 from University of Arkansas; Good disease resistance; Stores well.

Roseborough (Thorny) Large; Late May; Juicy fruit with delicious sweet flavor; Erect plant; Heavy producer; Disease resistant; Released by Texas A&M University in 1977.

RASPBERRIES:

Heritage (Thorny) Medium; Late August – Early September, if tipped (see text); Tart, mild, firm fruit; Good for eating fresh or cooking; Introduced by New York Agricultural Station in Geneva, N.Y. in 1969.