

Growing Your Own

A beginner's guide to gardening

Raspberries

Raspberries can be costly to buy, but you can grow them in your backyard. Plant their perennial roots and your raspberry patch will grow new canes each spring. You can pick your own fresh berries for years to come.

Varieties

Raspberries are *brambles*, which are prickly vines or shrubs in the rose family. Their roots grow shoots called *canes*.

Like blackberries (see UK Cooperative Extension Service publication [Growing Your Own: Blackberries](#) [NEP-243]), raspberry canes live for two years. The first-year canes are called *primocanes* (“primo” meaning “one”). They appear after being planted, and on certain varieties (primocane fruiting), they will form flower buds and then fruit on the first year’s growth. Just like blackberries, they will also start to flower and make fruit on this same growth the second year, called *floricanes* (“flora” meaning “flower”). In Kentucky, the primocane varieties grow much better than the floricanes varieties, so this publication focuses on how to grow primocane raspberries.

Raspberries can be black, red, yellow, or purple. Multiple reliable red and yellow primocane options bear well in Kentucky:

Red raspberries

- **Caroline** produces large, sweet, firm fruit. It has strong growth and will need a trellis.
- **Heritage** is the most commonly grown everbearing raspberry variety in the central and eastern United States. It produces a heavy fall crop from mid-August until the first hard frost on strong, upright canes.
- **Joan J** is a thornless variety that will produce a fall crop on the first year’s canes. The berries are large and firm.

Yellow raspberries

- **Anne** is the largest and best-tasting yellow everbearing raspberry. It provides excellent size and appearance with sweet flavor.

For more tips, see UK Cooperative Extension Service publication [Growing Blackberries and Raspberries in Kentucky](#) (HO-15).



Caroline
Nourse Farms



Heritage
Nourse Farms



Joan J
Nourse Farms



Anne
Nourse Farms

Raspberry Planting

Depth Cover all roots with at least 1 inch of soil
Rows 4–8 feet apart (depending on need for walking or mowing between rows)

Row base width 18–24 inches
Spacing 18–24 inches apart

Safe Planting Dates

Late March through early April



Planting bare-root stock in a trench
Rachel Rudolph, University of Kentucky

How much to plant

A 10- to 15-foot row of raspberries can produce enough fresh fruit for a family to enjoy. If you also want to make jams and baked goods, plant more.

When and how to plant

Choose a spot with deep, well-draining soil. If possible, plant on a northern slope or where there is afternoon shade.

Raised beds often increase fruit yield and may prevent root rot. You can create a row of mounded soil or build a raised bed with bricks, pavers, stone, or untreated wood and fill it with soil. See UK Cooperative Extension Service publication [Growing Your Own Vegetables: Preparing Your Garden \(NEP-219\)](#) for more information.

Do not plant where other food crops have grown in recent years to avoid soilborne diseases. Prepare a two-foot-wide planting row and allow four- to eight-foot-wide walkways between rows. The raspberry plants will expand and take up part of the walkway. You may add compost or slow-release fertilizer to the soil a few weeks before planting.

Raspberries are often bought as bare-root plants. Do not let the roots dry out before planting. You should plant in early spring (late March to early April). Dig a wide hole or trench deep enough to spread out the roots. Cover the roots with about an inch of soil. Firm the soil around the roots and water well. Apply mulch around the plants to help manage weeds and keep moisture in the soil. Plants will need routine watering after planting and throughout the growing season.

After planting, trim off the cane at ground level. New canes will grow from the crown. The crown is the short, thick stem where the roots meet the canes. Keep the soil moist until you see new canes emerging from the soil. It may take four to six weeks for the new canes to grow out of the ground. These canes will be green.



Bare-root raspberries
Nourse Farms



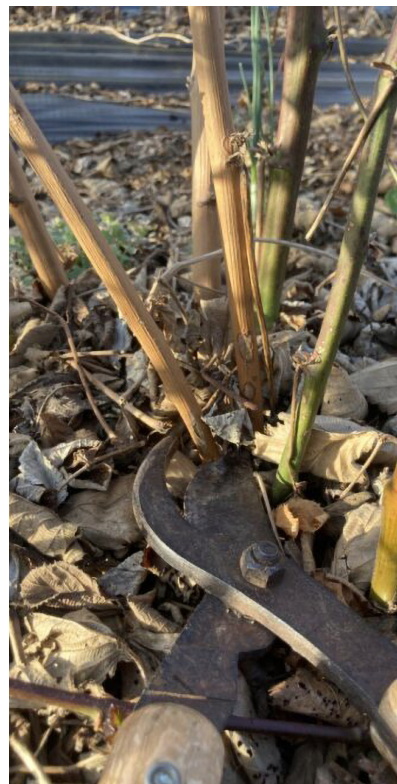
New brambles growing in a mulched bed
Kristi Durbin, University of Kentucky



Wooden T-trellis for raspberries
Erika Olsen, University of Kentucky



Metal T-post trellis with PVC pipe for raspberries
Kristi Durbin, University of Kentucky



Prune a bramble cane to the ground.
Kristi Durbin, University of Kentucky

Trellis

Raspberries are often supported with a T-trellis made of wood or metal. Two-foot cross bars hold wire supports along the row. There are often two sets of wires, with one set two feet off the ground and another set four to five feet off the ground.

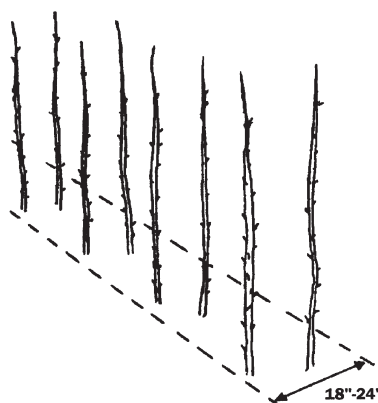
Winter pruning

Pruning is cutting a plant to change its shape, improve its growth, or remove dead canes. You need to prune raspberries

in the winter or early spring. For primocane raspberries, cut all canes down to the ground after they are dormant but before new growth starts. This is usually between December and February. This will produce one larger fall crop.

As the new canes grow in the spring, cut out canes that grow outside your base row. If needed, thin to the recommended spacing (see Raspberry Pruning chart). To thin, cut the skinniest canes down to ground level to allow enough space between each cane.

Raspberry Pruning



Row base width

18–24 inches

Thinning

4–8 canes per row foot

Raspberry plants before thinning (left) and after thinning (right)

Kristi Durbin, University of Kentucky



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Raspberry leaf with orange rust

Penn State Department of Plant Pathology and Environmental Microbiology Archives, Penn State University, Bugwood.org, CC BY-NC 3.0



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Spur blight cankers appear at the leaf nodes on bramble canes

Mary Ann Hansen, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Bugwood.org, CC BY 3.0



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Spotted wing drosophila larvae in a mushy raspberry

Hannah Burrack, North Carolina State University, Bugwood.org, CC BY 3.0

Pests and diseases

Many pests and diseases can affect brambles. To lessen problems, keep your raspberry bed clean. Pick up dead leaves and canes. Keep your rows narrow and thinned out so air can flow through the canes and leaves will dry quickly. Harvest fruit as soon as they are ripe. Remove any overripe fruit as they can attract pests. Cover with insect netting when the berries start to show color to prevent problems with insects and birds. Remove wild brambles nearby.

If your bramble leaves become oddly shaped or colored, the plant may have a virus or fungal infection. If cankers appear on canes or if the canes swell, this may be a disease such as cane blight or anthracnose. Remove any diseased plant parts and trash or burn them. If you find a lot of berries that are very soft and mushy, place them in the refrigerator or freezer right after picking. Spotted wing drosophila is a fruit fly that lays eggs in soft fruit and will make the berries watery.

For more tips on taking care of pests and diseases, check the UK Cooperative Extension publication [Growing Blackberries and Raspberries in Kentucky \(HO-15\)](#). If you need help identifying problems, contact your county Extension agent.



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Anthracnose cankers on bramble cane

Penn State Department of Plant Pathology and Environmental Microbiology Archives, Penn State University, Bugwood.org, CC BY-NC 3.0

Harvesting

Ripe fruit will come off the plant when you pull it gently. You should pick daily or every other day. Pick fruit with care and gently place in a container. Put fresh raspberries in the refrigerator right after picking.

Serving

Raspberries are tasty fresh or cooked. Gently wash fruit before eating. They make great jams, pies, sauces, muffins, cakes, and other desserts. You can strain cooked raspberry products to remove seeds.

Storing

Ripe fruit will keep for a day or two in the refrigerator. Do not wash until you are ready to eat or cook them. You can also freeze raspberries for future use. Be sure to wash and dry fruit well before freezing.

Clean up

In late winter, cut all remaining canes down to the ground. Throw away or burn any plant material to avoid the spread of disease.



Ripe raspberries ready to pick, next to green unripe raspberries
Jann Knappage, University of Kentucky



Summary

Varieties

Red and yellow primocane raspberries can grow well in Kentucky. Many suitable varieties are available.

How much to plant

Plant a 10- or 15-foot row of raspberry canes to enjoy fresh raspberries for a family.

How and when to plant

Plant bare-root raspberry plants in early spring.

Pests and diseases

Raspberries can get many diseases and pests. Keep your raspberry bed clean and with good air flow to have fewer problems.

Harvesting

Ripe raspberries will come off easily when tugged. Gently pick and place in a container. Refrigerate after picking.

Serving

Raspberries are tasty fresh or cooked. Gently wash before eating.

Storing

Fresh raspberries will keep for a day or two in the refrigerator.

Clean up

In late winter, cut all remaining canes down to the ground. Throw away or burn.

Words to know

Bramble — a woody vine or shrub in the rose family.

Some are grown for their fruit, such as raspberries and blackberries.

Cane — a woody bramble “shoot.” Many brambles will have thorny canes.

Florican — two-year-old bramble canes that flower and bear fruit.

Primocane — first-year bramble canes. May give fruit in certain varieties.

Authors

Erika Olsen, Extension Associate
Rick Durham, Extension Consumer Horticulture Specialist
Rachel Rudolph, Extension Vegetable Specialist

Contributors

Jann Knappage, Food System Specialist
Rita May, Senior Extension Associate
Michele West, Marketing and Media Specialist

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