

Extension Notes

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AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES

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Berry Good Deal: Snag Sweet Savings during the Extension Office's Plant Sale!

Packed with antioxidants and brimming with vitamins, berry plants are a delicious investment in your well-being. Whether you have a spacious backyard or a sunny balcony, there's a berry out there waiting to befriend you.

Raspberries and blackberries, commonly called brambles, grow well in Kentucky. With favorable growing conditions and proper care, a raspberry planting may produce for 8-12 years. Blackberry plants usually live longer than raspberries because they are better adapted to Kentucky's climate. They both have biennial canes and perennial roots. The roots and crowns live for several years and produce a new crop of canes each spring, while the fruit matures on last season's canes.

Deep, fertile soil that is well drained, high in humus and free from hard pans is best for brambles. However, almost any well-drained soil can be modified to grow brambles. Planting brambles on raised beds may help reduce root rot and prolong the life of the planting. Trickle irrigation and mulching will help ensure good plant growth and high yield. When possible, plant brambles on a northern slope or where there is afternoon shade. Such soils are cooler and hold moisture better.

Remember to purchase certified, virus-free stock when possible.

Strawberries will also grow well in Kentucky and for the best results, select a site with deep, sandy loam soil well supplied with organic matter. Clay soils can produce a good crop if the site has been prepared to drain well and has added organic matter. Fields with heavy perennial weed pressure should not be planted to strawberries. Avoid fields that have been in potatoes, tobacco, peppers, eggplants, or tomatoes due to potential problems with *Verticillium* wilt. Strawberries need to be located on ground higher than the surrounding area to reduce the chance of spring frost damage. A protective straw mulch should be applied when plants become dormant in late fall and removed the following spring.

Strawberries are commonly grouped as either June-bearing, everbearing, or day-neutral. June-bearing varieties have been grown in Kentucky for many years. They are typically planted in early spring and blossoms are removed during the first season to encourage runner establishment. A full crop is harvested during the second and subsequent seasons. June-bearing varieties produce flowers under short-day conditions. Early varieties may be more subject to frost injury because of their bloom time, and the opened blossom is at the stage of fruit development most susceptible for frost injury. Strawberry varieties all ripen about 30 days after bloom. June-bearing strawberries normally produce the largest yield per season, in a short period of time. If you want enough berries for freezing and processing choose June Bearers.

Everbearing and day-neutral strawberries are very similar under Kentucky conditions. Both produce few runners and flower buds develop regardless of the day length. They typically yield three crops during a season: a moderate spring crop, a summer crop of small berries, and a heavier fall crop. Total season-long yields, however, are similar to those of June-bearing strawberries. The fall crop depends on having a cooler summer for obtaining good fruit size and yields. During the first year of establishment, blossoms are removed so that only a fall crop is produced.

Spotted wing drosophila is a newer pest in Kentucky that is of particular concern to any soft fruit that matures after July 1. Populations tend to be low enough prior to that time that they are not a serious concern for June-bearing varieties.

The Carter County Extension Service is currently taking orders for Kentucky recommended varieties of blackberry, raspberry, and strawberry plants. Order forms can be picked up at the Extension Office or accessed online at <https://carter.ca.uky.edu/berry>. All orders are due by February 13th.

Upcoming Events:

- **Small Ruminant Quality Assurance** – Thursday, January 18th @ 6:00 PM – Call 474-6686 to register.
- **Northeast Area Livestock Association** – Tuesday, January 23rd @ 6:00 PM – Speaker: Dr. Jimmy Henning, UK Forage Specialist; Topic: A Deeper Dive into Hay Samples
- **No-Till Drill Clinic** – Tuesday, January 30th @ 6:00 PM @ Boyd County Fairgrounds Expo Building
- **Master Cattleman** – Six-part series begins on February 8th at the Boyd County Fairgrounds Expo Building. Call 474-6686 to register by January 25th.