

Berry Plant Information

Brambles



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 a number of 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. The two bramble varieties available through the Extension Office are:

- ⇒ Triple Crown (Blackberry) - The berry is named for its three crowning attributes – flavor, productivity and vigor. The plants yield large, glossy black fruit that are pleasantly firm. Plants can be trellised or grown upright and pruned to a height of about 42”.
- ⇒ Jewel (Black Raspberry) - The plant is vigorous, erect, consistently productive and widely adapted. The fruit ripens early and the ripening season is concentrated. The berries are large, with glossy skin, coherent, firm, of superior quality and excellent flavor.

Strawberries

For the best strawberry 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 shortday 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. The two June-bearing varieties being offered by the Extension Office this year are:

- ⇒ Earliglow sets the standard for traditional strawberry taste. It is the max for fresh out of the garden eating, jams and freezing. So sweet no sugar is needed. For years Earliglow has been one of the biggest sellers in the Eastern U.S. for gardeners and smaller commercial growers. It is the earliest fruiting variety available. The first and second pickings are nice sized berries for eating out of hand and the later pickings are fantastic for jams and freezing.
- ⇒ Flavorfest performs well on plasticulture as well as matted row. Flavorfest has shown consistent high yields, bright red and excellent flavor. Also shows good resistance to red stele and most stem and leaf diseases as well as no susceptibility to anthracnose crown or fruit rot.

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.

- ⇒ Seascape is a very large, hardy, heavy producing variety with firm fruit, good color and flavor when picked ripe. Resistant to Red Stele, Verticillium, Leaf Spot and Leaf Scorch.