

## RASPBERRY AND BLACKBERRY CULTURE

Raspberries and blackberries are easy to grow; the difficult part is keeping them under control (that's why they're called brambles!). **Here are a couple of basics to remember:**

**pH: 6.5 - 6.8**

**In-row spacing: 24" for raspberries and 3'- 4' for blackberries**

### **Planting bare-root plants:**

We recommend incorporating a light application of an all-natural fertilizer such as *Espoma Garden-Tone* a week or so prior to planting. When ready to plant, place your roots in a bucket of water (**no longer than 2 hours**), as their fine roots can dry out very quickly. It is recommended from our source to then dig a trench 2" deep with a hoe the length of your bed. Spread the roots out along the bottom of the trench 24" apart and cover immediately. Keeping roots at the 2" level promotes suckers to develop from the roots. Water thoroughly, and maintain even moisture while plants are getting established. This does not mean soaking to the point of soggy. One to three times a week is sufficient depending on weather. One to two inches of water after establishment, be it from rain or irrigation, should be maintained. Yes, it can get a bit tricky these days due to either extreme heat and dryness on the one hand, or way too much rain on the other, right? In July of the planting year, apply another application of Garden-tone as recommended on the label. In the following years, fertilize in early spring.

### **Trellis and training:**

For summer-bearing raspberries, trellising is recommended. A T-post trellis, with posts measuring 4 ft. above ground with a "T" crossbar measuring 12" across and bolted 3" from the top of each post works well. Screw eyes placed on either end of the "T's" will accommodate the 2 wires that connect to the posts. If this sounds confusing, please consult the [Nourse Farms](#) planting guide online.

For blackberries, the trellis is a heavy-duty 6 ft. post at each end of your bed. Connecting wires are spaced at heights 2 ½ ft., 3 ½ ft., 4 ½ ft., and 5 ½ ft.

### **Pruning summer bearing raspberries and blackberries:**

Directly after harvest, prune out canes that have already fruited. Thin remaining new growth to 5-8 healthy, strong canes per running foot.

For blackberries, tip 1<sup>st</sup> year canes when they reach 5 ft. This practice will encourage lateral branching that will produce more fruit. Canes that have fruited can be pruned out after harvest. Thin remaining canes to 6-8 healthy, strong canes per running yard.

### **My story:**

Years ago I practiced the trellis system for my summer bearing raspberries. At first, it was neat and tidy, but it wasn't long before these brambles did their "bramble thing". Roots quickly extended out of bounds, and soon it became too much effort to contain them. It wasn't long before I decided to go with a fall-bearing variety, and I never looked back.

I now allow a manageable patch to establish, and what a relief it is to cut that whole patch down after harvest sometime in October! This blessing allows me to deal with other summer crops in a timely manner when so much comes in all at once. Sometime in November, at my convenience, I do some thinning (sometimes radical thinning- haha), because, after all these are brambles. I eliminate weak plants and make sure there is enough space for the remaining plants. A cleared path down the middle allows me to reach everybody for picking. Just outside the patch, I fork over soil, as I'm on the prowl for roots sneaking into my vegetable garden or lawn. Edging is important. I then apply a generous application of compost to the patch, and I'm done until spring. The patch gets an application of Garden-tone every spring when I get around to it in April.