

# **BLACKBERRY, BOYSENBERRY, ELDERBERRY AND RASPBERRY**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Summer and berries—searching the roadside for patches of tasty wild berries for jams and fresh eating. Every country family has done it, but some new cultivars make it easy to have that same flavor in a patch in your backyard (and some varieties are thornless). Blackberries, boysenberries, elderberries and fuzzy raspberries (Yes, we have a raspberry for the South) are all self-pollinating, so plant one or plant 100!

## **USES IN THE LANDSCAPE**

Brambles can be upright hedge varieties or trailing varieties that require a trellis. Use a row of hedging blackberries to define your garden's edge. Add a boysenberry or raspberry trellis beside a path and have a berry on the way down the driveway. The hedging growth of elderberry bushes can add a graceful screen to your property or when planted as a single specimen develops into a graceful 10 foot shrub with arching canes, beautiful in flower as well as when fruiting. Regardless of which berry you choose, don't forget to plant a few extra plants for all the wildlife they'll attract!

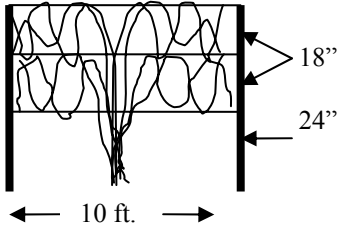
## **PLANTING AND CULTURE**

### **SITE SELECTION**

Well-drained, sandy, rich soils are preferred. Brambles do not tolerate flooding and may grow poorly in mucky soils unless planted in raised mounds. Elderberries on the other hand love wetlands. All berry plants will grow more vigorously and produce more fruit in full sun.

## SOIL PREPARATION AND PLANTING

Brambles prefer slightly acid soil (pH 6.0-6.5), but soils of up to moderate alkalinity are tolerated. Elderberries aren't picky about soil types and will thrive in acid or alkaline soils. If you are in doubt about the acidity of your soil, take a soil sample to the Cooperative Extension Agent in your county for a soil test. Enrich the bed with 1 to 3 inches of aged manure or pine bark. Beds may be mulched with organic mulches like hay, oat straw, bark and leaves.



For trailing varieties and raspberry plants, you will need a trellis. To construct a simple trellis use two 7-8 feet upright posts sunk 2 feet in the ground leaving 5-6 feet above ground. Anchor end posts. Attach three 9-gauge wires at 18-inch intervals beginning 24 inches from the ground. Place posts no more than 20 feet apart for best stability (diagram has posts at 10 ft.). Dig your planting hole 5 feet from the posts, leaving 10 feet between plants.

Plant erect varieties at least 2 to 3 feet apart in the row with 15 feet between rows. Trailing varieties need to be spaced 10 foot apart in rows 15 foot apart. Space Elderberry plants at least 5 feet apart so they will have room to spread.

Before planting make sure the plants are well watered and the soil in your planting hole is not excessively dry. Remove the plant from the pot and place in the planting hole. To avoid burying too deep, make sure plant is positioned with the top most roots at the soil line. If plants have a tightly packed root system gently work the root ball loose. Water thoroughly to settle the roots and eliminate air pockets. **Do NOT put fertilizer in the planting hole.** Only apply fertilizer if it is the correct time of year (see Fertilization section below).

Six to 12 canes per plant should produce 2-3 gallons of fruit, if plants are properly fertilized and watered.

## WATER

The first weeks are the critical time for the establishment of a new plant. Water every other day for the first week after they are set out. After plants are established, water thoroughly twice a week on light soils and once a week on clay soils. Soak the entire root system deeply - this usually takes 40-50 minutes. Be sure to mulch your plants with 2 to 3 inches of hay, bark or leaves. Pull mulch a couple of inches away from the stems for good air circulation. Mulch will help hold water in the soil as well as add organic content to your soil. Water regularly, especially during dry periods. Fruit may drop prematurely if insufficiently irrigated during dry spells.

## FERTILIZATION

We use and recommend the Espoma line of organic fertilizers. Espoma's Citrus Tone is a good blend for berry plants. When not available look for an organic mix that contains an analyst of roughly 5-2-6. Make sure your fertilizer mix contains iron, zinc, manganese, magnesium, molybdenum, copper and boron. These minor elements are very important to plants and most soils are low in these elements. Application rates vary according to type and age of plant, so read the instructions on the bag and fertilize accordingly. Be sure to spread the fertilizer

evenly over the plants root zone. Water or rake in. In Zone 8 through 9 fertilize 3 times each year in February, May and late July/early August. For plants further north (Zones 6-7), fertilize 2 times each year in March and June/July. **Never fertilize after August** (July in Zones 6-7) as this will promote new growth late in the year which will be subject to freeze damage.

For hedge row plantings of blackberry, boysenberry and raspberry plants the amount of fertilizer applied increases each year until the 4<sup>th</sup> year after planting.

- Year 1: In February, sprinkle 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  cups of Citrus Tone in a 24-inch circle around each plant. In May and late July, sprinkle 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  cups of Citrus Tone in a 30-inch circle around each plant.
- Year 2: In February, sprinkle 2 cup of Citrus Tone in a 36-inch circle around each plant. Repeat in May and late July.
- Year 3 and on: In February, sprinkle 4 cups of Citrus Tone around each plant in a 4 ft. circle around each plant. In May and late July, sprinkle 1 cup of Citrus Tone in the same 4 ft. circle around each plant. HEDGE ROW PLANTINGS by the 3<sup>rd</sup> year the plants should have grown together, apply 4 cups of Citrus Tone for every four foot of row, spread fertilizer in a four foot wide band down the row.

For elderberries use 1 cup of Citrus Tone for each year of a elderberry's age in February, May and late July/early August (i.e. 1 cup per application for a one year-old elderberry, 2 cups for a two year-old). Continue increasing fertilizer yearly until application rate reaches 4 cups.

## **PRUNING**

For trellised varieties: Fruit is produced on 2 year-old canes, which die after fruiting. New canes that sprout in the spring will fruit the following year. In the first year after planting, the canes you planted will fruit. Thread the original canes you planted through the wires for the fruiting season. Allow the current year's new canes to run along the ground. After fruiting, cut and remove the canes that have fruited. Thread the new canes through the trellis. Spread canes evenly through the trellis and thread carefully to avoid breakage and support the canes.

For erect or upright varieties: Fruit is produced on 2 year-old canes, which die after fruiting. New canes that sprout in the spring will fruit the following year. In the first year after planting, the canes you planted will fruit and should be removed after they die. The new canes produced from the original canes you planted in spring, should be topped to about 40 inches in early summer to encourage lateral branching, and then allowed to grow until the winter dormant season. In each succeeding year, remove the current year's fruiting canes after they produce fruit.

Elderberry: Fruits each year and like blueberries extend themselves through suckers that come up from the roots. In time elderberries can become a thick hedge and will require clearing out of old and dead branches/stems.

## **BLACKBERRY VARIETIES**

Upright hedge varieties

**CHICKASAW** - Arkansas release. Excellent, early ripening variety with large fruit (1 inch). Use this one to get a longer ripening season. Ripens in early June. Zones 8A-8B.

**CHOCTAW** - More from Arkansas. Mid season fruit with excellent flavor and a 1 inch fruit. One of the best flavored of the Arkansas releases. Ripens in mid to late June. Zones 8B-9.

**KIOWA** - Yet another Arkansas release with fruit the size of golf balls. Yes that's right golf balls. Vigorous plants with excellent quality fruit. Ripens in late June into July. Zones 8A-9.

**OUACHITA** - Arkansas release. Vigorous and productive with 1 inch berries on a thorn-free plant. One of the first thornless blackberries that thrives in the lower south. Ripens starting early June over 5 weeks. Zones 8A-8B.

**SOUTHERN** - A Central Florida heirloom passed on to us by a customer from Melbourne, FL area. Large, thumb-sized fruit with a great flavor. Try this one in Tampa and Orlando. Ripens in June. Zone 9.

Trailing varieties

**THORNLESS BOYSENBERRY** - A flavor cross of raspberries and blackberries. Great flavor and no thorns. Needs a trellis. Ripens in July. Zones 8A-9.

## **RASPBERRY VARIETIES**

**FUZZY RASPBERRY** Hailing from Australia these fuzzy-leafed (and thorny) vines produce raspberries that thrive in humid conditions. Self fertile. Zones 7-9.

## **ELDERBERRY VARIETIES**

**FLORIDA SELECT ELDERBERRY** - This lovely native tree/shrub, mostly evergreen in Zones 8-11, is found in wet woodlands and floodplain forests. The fruit is used in wines and jams. Small berries attract birds, butterflies, and other wildlife when ripe in late summer. Zones 8-11.

Most people just don't know what to do with elderberries. We're big fans of the fruit, the flowers are wonderful for making pancakes, wine or dried and used in a tea. The ripe berries are the best for wine making. Here's a great recipe for making Elderberry blow or flower pancakes, the flowers lighten up the batter and give it a wonderful enticing sweetness.

### **Elderberry Blow Pancakes**

Make up your favorite pancake recipe or just cheat and use Bisquick. Take the umbels of the blossom and dip them in the batter and then fry them in a skillet with a little grease. Use scissors to clip off the tops of the stems that are sticking out of the pancake, then flip them over and fry the other side, serve with a little brown sugar.