

Pruning Raspberries, Blackberries and Gooseberries

Pruning gooseberries

Gooseberries produce fruit on 2-year-old canes, 3-year-old canes and older canes. New canes originate from the underground crown each season on vigorous plants. The younger canes are more productive, so it is desirable to remove the older, weaker canes by cutting them out at the soil line. This leaves a preponderance of the younger, more vigorous canes and encourages a continuous replacement of new canes. Young plants, therefore, require little pruning for the first three or four years.

Pruning black raspberries and purple raspberries

Raspberries produce fruit on 2-year-old canes, which die after the crop has matured. The pruning of black and purple raspberries consists of:

1. Tipping the new canes when they reach a height of 18 to 20 inches, thus forming a branched cane that is capable of producing more fruit than an unbranched cane. Branched canes are also more able to support the crop off the ground than unbranched canes.

2. As the buds break in the spring, the branches on the canes should be shortened to 8 to 12 inches (longer if the plant is supported by stakes or a wire trellis).

3. After the crop is harvested, the old fruiting canes should be removed at the soil line. (The removal of the old canes as soon as the crop is harvested is a good disease control practice since it removes an important source of infection.)

Pruning red raspberries

Red raspberries should be allowed to produce long, unbranched canes rather than branched canes like the black and purple varieties.

The new canes are, therefore, unpruned during their first season's growth. At the start of the second

season, they are topped to a height that will permit them to support themselves and keep the fruit off the ground. If the plants are supported by stakes or a wire trellis, they can be pruned to permit more fruiting wood.

The old canes die after the crop is matured, and they should be removed as early as possible in order to remove sources of disease.

Pruning upright blackberries

Standard American varieties of blackberries are usually able to support themselves without stakes or a trellis. Pruning is similar to that of black and purple raspberries except the canes grow taller. To prune these upright blackberries:

1. Tip the new canes at a height of 24 to 30 inches to form branched canes.

2. As growth starts, remove all dead and weak canes or branches and head the branches back to a length of 12 to 15 inches or to the degree that the canes can support the expected crop.

3. After the crop is harvested, remove the 2-year-old wood to stimulate the new canes and remove sources of diseases.

Pruning trailing blackberries (Dewberries, Boysenberries, etc.)

Trailing blackberries are not grown extensively in Missouri because of a lack of hardiness and their susceptibility to bramble diseases.

Like other brambles, they bear fruit primarily on 2-year-old wood.

The one-year wood is usually allowed to grow on the ground, where it can be mulched for winter protection. As growth starts in the spring, these canes can be lifted up and tied to a trellis or stakes for fruiting. Weak canes should be removed as well as all dead wood and the stronger canes shortened to fit the trellis or stakes (usually 36 to 40 inches high).

After the crop is harvested, the old fruiting wood is removed while the new wood is permitted to remain on the ground until next spring (Figure 1).

Credits

Reviewed by **Michele R. Warmund**, Professor and State Fruit Extension Specialist, Division of Plant Sciences

Additional suggestions

1. In tipping the new growth of black and purple raspberries and upright blackberries, each cane should have the growing tip pinched out as it reaches the desired height. If several inches of the cane are removed, the side branches are severely stunted.

2. Trailing blackberries and red raspberries should be supported by stakes or a wire trellis to produce maximum crops. The same is true of black and purple raspberries, especially for the first crop (2-year-old plants). These will support themselves fairly satisfactorily after the second year.

3. All brambles in Missouri are subject to several serious plant diseases that are difficult to control. As a result, the plantings are usually short-lived and require frequent replacement.

4. Upright blackberries are frequently affected with a sterility condition in which the plant blossoms normally but produces no fruit. There is no control for this condition and such plantings should be removed.

5. A thorough spray program will assist in producing satisfactory crops of both raspberries and blackberries.

6. Gooseberries are usually quite easily grown and require no spraying unless attacked by foliage insects.

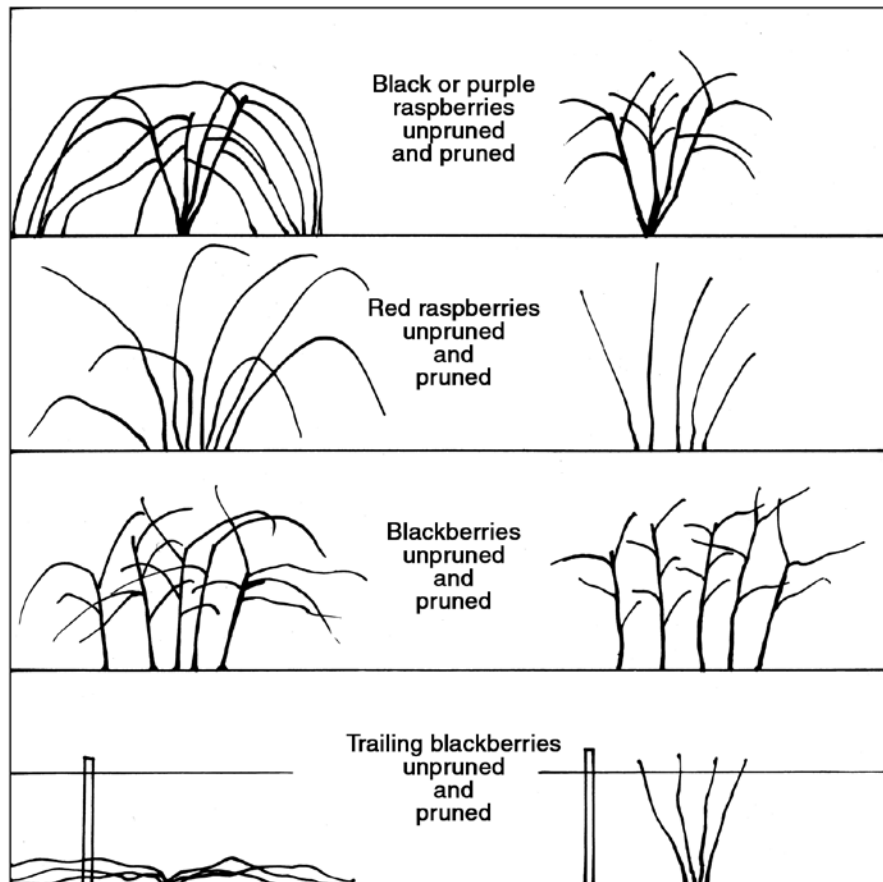


Figure 1. Pruned and unpruned raspberries and blackberries.

Also from MU Extension Publications

G6005 *Fruit and Nut Cultivars for Home Plantings*

GH1455 *Quality for Keeps: Food Preservation – Fruitful Canning*

GH1461 *Quality for Keeps: Jam and Jelly Basics – Tempt Your Tastebuds With Natural Sweets*

GH1502 *Quality for Keeps: Freezing Fruits*

extension.missouri.edu

1-800-292-0969