



Raspberries

Raspberries are really popular garden fruits and are very easy to grow.

Try growing both summer and autumn-fruiting varieties: just a few plants will reward you with plenty of fruit from midsummer until mid autumn. If you end up with a glut, raspberries also freeze well, and make wonderful jams, sauces and cooked desserts.

Pruning

Regular annual pruning will result in healthier plants, and better quality crops.

Summer-fruiting raspberries (florocanes)

Cut back fruited canes to ground level after harvesting; do not leave old stubs.

Select the strongest young canes, around six to eight per plant, and tie them in 8 – 10cm (3–4in) apart along the wire supports.

Remove the remaining young stems to ground level.

Autumn-fruiting raspberries (primocanes)

Cut back all the canes to ground level in February.

Reduce the number of canes slightly in summer if they are very overcrowded.

Training

Single fence

This system is ideal for summer-fruiting raspberries in a small garden.

Drive 2.5m (8ft) long and 75mm (3in) diameter posts into the ground to a depth of 75cm (30in) at 5m (15ft) intervals.

Stretch 12 gauge (3.5mm) galvanised wire between the posts at 60cm (2ft) vertical intervals.

Plant the summer-fruiting raspberries and tie in the canes along one side of the wires.

Keep fruiting canes on one side and young new canes to the other side of the wires as the season progresses. In autumn, the fruited canes can easily be pruned out and the young canes will be separated along the other side of the wire.

Single fence with parallel wires

This system is well suited to autumn-fruiting raspberries, and increases yield in a small space for summer-fruiting raspberries. Tying in of canes is not necessary. Picking is more difficult, and there is a greater chance of fungal problems in the more crowded conditions.

Drive 2.5m (8ft) long and 75mm (3in) diameter posts into the ground to a depth of 75cm (30in) at 5m (15ft) intervals.

Attach two short horizontal lengths of timber to each post, one at the top, and one 60cm (2ft) below.

Stretch 12 gauge (3.5mm) galvanised wire in parallel lines along the ends of the horizontal lengths of timber to create two parallel lengths of wire along the fence.

Stretch thin wire or garden twine between the parallel galvanised wires as cross ties, every 60cm (2ft) along.

The raspberry canes do not need tying in, as they will be supported by the parallel wires and cross ties.

Single post

This system is ideal for a very small garden.

Drive a 2.5m (8ft) long and 75mm (3in) diameter post into the ground to a depth of 75cm (30in).

Plant two or three plants around the base and tie in the canes with garden twine.

In mid-spring, sprinkle a general-purpose fertiliser such as Growmore around the base of the plants, then add a mulch of garden compost or well-rotted farmyard manure.

This will prevent weeds growing.

In early summer, pull up suckers between the rows of summer raspberries, and thin autumn raspberry canes to 10cm (4in) apart.

Keep raspberries well watered during dry periods.

Planting

Raspberries thrive in moisture-retentive, fertile, slightly acidic soils, which are well-drained and weed free. They dislike soggy soils and shallow chalky soils. For best results, plant in a sheltered, sunny position; although they will tolerate part shade.

Raspberries can be planted any time during the dormant season, between November and March, providing the soil is not frozen or waterlogged.

Most people grow summer-fruiting raspberries, which are ready for harvesting in early summer. You can also buy autumn-fruiting raspberries, which are ready for harvest from late August to October.

You will see raspberries for sale in two forms: bare-root canes (as the name suggests, the roots are exposed when you purchase these plants) or in containers. Both forms should be planted between November and March.

Raspberries are usually planted in rows and trained along a post and wire system. But, if you have a smaller garden, you can still grow raspberries, either in containers, or train them up a single post.

Raspberry flowers are self-fertile and pollinated by insects, so avoid a very windy site unless you can put up windbreaks or shelterbelts. Also, the fruiting side branches of some cultivars are very long and may break in the wind.

Before planting, clear the site of perennial weeds, as these are difficult to control once raspberries are established. Space the plants around 45-60cm (18in–2ft) apart, then add a 7.5cm (3in) thick mulch of bulky organic matter. Avoid mushroom compost or overly rich farmyard manure, which can burn the new shoots.

Tie summer cultivars to the support wires as they grow.

You can grow raspberries in containers. Pot up raspberry canes in autumn, three to a 30cm (12in) pot, using 50:50 John Innes No 3 compost and multi-purpose potting compost. Make sure plants are well fed and watered during summer.

In early March apply slow-release general fertiliser, fish, blood and bone for example, at 34g per sq m (1oz per sq yd), then mulch with well-rotted organic matter. If the growth is weak, apply sulphate of ammonia at 34g per sq m (1oz per sq yd) or dried poultry manure pellets at 100g per sq m (3oz per sq yd).

Plants should be 45-60cm (18in–2ft) apart, and if planting in rows, space the rows 1.8m (6ft) apart, ideally running north to south, so that they do not shade each other.

Prune the canes to within 25 cm (10in) of the ground after planting.

Container growing

Single raspberry plants can be grown in 38cm (15in) diameter containers of 80 per cent multipurpose compost and, to add weight for stability, 20 percent loam-based potting compost, training the canes up bamboo poles.

Keep the compost moist and feed with a liquid general-purpose fertiliser on a monthly basis during the growing season.

Common problems

Raspberry beetle: This is the main problem on raspberries. Dry patches develop at the stalk end in midsummer, and often you will find a small white maggot inside the fruit.

Remedy: You can pick off the infected fruit, but this will not stop the spread. Grow autumn fruiting plants which are less affected.

Raspberry cane blight: Cane blight is a serious fungal disease in raspberries. During summer, leaves on fruiting canes wither and the bases of the canes turn dark brown, and the bark may split. The wood becomes very brittle so that the canes snap off easily at the base.

Remedy: Weak and plants under stress are more susceptible to cane blight, so make sure raspberries are well watered and mulch with well-rotted manure around the base to prevent drying out. When planting, make sure canes are well-spaced so that they have good air circulation. Where the disease develops, cut out and dispose of any affected canes. Cut back to below soil level and disinfect the secateurs between cuts.

Raspberry spur blight: This is a fungal disease causing purple patches on canes. It rarely kills raspberries, but can reduce yield severely by weakening the canes and killing buds.

Remedy: Avoid overcrowding by thinning out any young canes that are not required. This should be done as early in the spring as possible. If spur blight develops, cut out and dispose of badly affected canes.

Harvesting

The first summer raspberries are ready for harvesting in early summer, whereas autumn raspberries don't mature until late summer. Pick on a dry day. Eat them fresh, freeze them, or make them into preserves.

Varieties

Glen Moy AGM: This early summer raspberry bears heavy crops of medium to large berries, which have a good flavour. It may also produce a small crop on the new canes, in autumn. The spine-free canes are compact.

Glen Ample AGM: Delicious, large fruit produced in mid-summer on this extremely heavy-yielding summer cultivar with vigorous, upright, spine-free canes. The berries are produced on long, upright stems, making picking easy.

Autumn Bliss AGM: The short, sturdy canes of this popular autumn cultivar produce

high yields from late summer to mid-autumn. The fruit is large and deep red, with a firm texture and excellent flavour.