



Bucks Country Gardens

Growing Raspberries

PREPARATION

Raspberries do best in full sun, but will grow in partial shade. Do not plant them in positions exposed to the frost or strong winds. They do well in any well-drained, but moisture retaining, slightly acidic soil. Raspberries will also grow in alkaline soil if it is enriched with compost or decayed material.

The best way to grow raspberries is in a row, with the canes trained against wires. First clear the site of perennial weeds - either dig them up or use a weed killer, such as paraquat.

In late summer or early autumn, prepare the ground by digging a shade-deep trench about 2.5 feet wide. Fork well-rotted compost, peat moss or manure into the bottom at the rate of about two 2-gallon buckets per square yard. At the same time add 2 tablespoons of fertilizer per square yard. Then fill in the trench with soil.

The best time to plant is in the late fall, although it can be done at any time from fall to spring. Dig a shallow trench about 3 inches deep and 6-9 inches wide. Place the young plants upright in it, 18 inches apart and with roots spread out. Cover the roots with 3 inches of soil, and firm gently with your feet. Leave 6 feet of space between rows.

Immediately after planting, cut each cane to just above a good bud, 9-12 inches above ground level. Stable manure, if available, is ideal fertilizer, applied in the fall each year. Approximately a month before growth starts in spring, apply about 1/4 pound of 5-10-5 per square yard. Allow these fertilizers to be washed into the soil naturally.

In early spring mulch with a 2 inch layer of garden compost, manure or peat moss, to conserve moisture in the soil. Water well in warm, dry spells.

SUPPORTIVE THE LONG, FLEXIBLE SHOOTS

During the summer, when the canes are producing fresh growth, sink an 8-foot wooden post 2 feet into the ground at each end of the row. Then stretch 2 galvanized wires between the posts 3 feet and 5.5 feet above the ground; or stretch 2 parallel wires, 1 foot apart, from crosspieces fixed at right angles to the posts about 4 feet above the ground. Keep the wires parallel with strong s-shaped hooks. For both methods use 12-13 gauge galvanized wire.

The first midsummer after planting, tie canes individually with soft string to the 2 wire system. With parallel wires, ensure that all canes are inside them.

WHEN TO GATHER RIPE FRUIT

Do not try for a crop the first summer after planting, as this will reduce the vigor of future canes. Early in the summer after planting cut off all blossoms or fruits on the young canes. Allow canes to bear the second year after planting.

REPLACING OLD CANES WITH NEW

Raspberry canes that bear one midsummer crop and biennial; the canes grow the first summer, fruit the next, then die. In late summer, when summer-fruiting raspberries have been picked, untie canes that have borne fruit, and cut them off, just above the soil level. Do not cut canes off current year's growth.

Train eight of the strongest new canes on each plant. Cut out weak new canes at soil level. Also cut out all the canes that spring up between rows to prevent crowding. In late winter cut back each cane growing above the top wire to a bud just a few inches above the wire.

To obtain early summer and fall fruits from overbearing varieties, such as Heritage, prune the canes back to live wood, and think out the weaker canes in the winter after fruiting in the fall. But, if you also have a summer bearing one crop variety, such as Sodus, prune the Heritage type by cutting all canes to the ground in the winter. This forfeits the early crop, but produces larger and better berries in the fall.