



BERRIES

INCLUDING: GRAPES, CURRANTS, STRAWBERRIES, GOOSEBERRIES, ELDERBERRIES, BLUEBERRIES, RASPBERRIES AND BLACKBERRIES

HUMBER NURSERIES 'GREEN THUMB GUIDE'

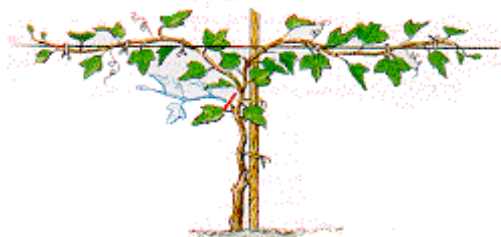


GRAPES

Grapes grow best in full sun in loose deep soil at a pH level of about 5.5 to 7.0. Good drainage is essential – grapes will not tolerate wet feet. They grow well on a fairly lean diet and supplemental fertilizer is rarely needed unless the soil is severely deficient in nutrients.

Stake the main stem with a sturdy post and provide lateral supports of about 125 cm on both sides. Grapes can be integrated into the landscape and grown on fences, walls or arbors. Be sure to build the structure so that it is strong enough to support the weight of a mature fruiting vine.

Grapes are produced on new shoots that sprout from the previous year's growth (canes). Since grape vines require sun to produce fruit, train and prune to allow as much sun as possible to reach the fruiting parts. (See illustration)



CANE PRUNING

Most North American grapes do not produce fruit on shoots that grow too near the main stem. For these grapes you must Cane Prune, a specific technique for pruning grapes carried out in the spring dormant season.



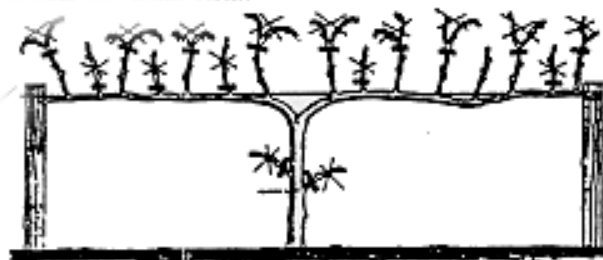
Remove shoots from the trunk, and cut horizontal branches back so that two long shoots remain on each vine. On a two-wire trellis, you can leave up to eight shoots per vine. Tie the shoot farthest from the trunk to the trellis. Cut the other to 2 or 3 buds. The tied shoot will fruit the following summer. The clipped shoot will produce growth to replace it next winter and bear fruit the year after.

Train each vine to either two or four arms. For four, allow three shoots to grow during the second growing season. Train two shoots horizontally, tie the others vertically until they reach the upper support then pinch the top and select two horizontals.

In subsequent years, when the outside cane has borne fruit, cut it back to the inside stub, now holding two or three new canes. Select the best and tie it to the trellis for fruit. Cut the next to two or three buds. Remove the weakest at the base.

SPUR PRUNING

European grapes bear fruit from buds near the main stem and require spur pruning in the dormant spring season.



Remove all shoots from vertical trunk. Choose the strongest side shoots on horizontal branches and cut to two buds. Remove weak shoots at the base, spacing two-budded spurs about 15 to 25 cm apart.

In subsequent dormant seasons, each spur will have a pair of shoots that produced fruit during the summer. Cut the stronger to two buds. These buds will produce fruit-bearing shoots in summer. Remove the weaker shoot, and always keep the trunk clear of growth.

CURRENTS AND GOOSEBERRIES

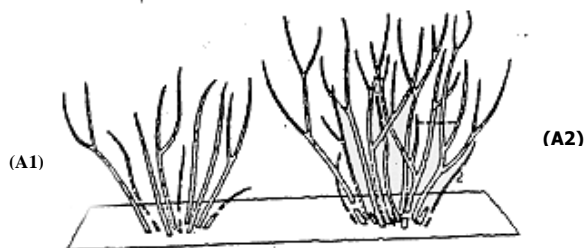
Currants and gooseberries are among the easiest berries to grow. They are winter hardy but don't appreciate hot summers (daytime temperatures that are frequently in excess of 85°F stress the plants and can cause defoliation and fruit damage).

Plant in sun or partial shade in rich, well drained soil high in organic matter. Space plants at least 125 cm apart. Black currants are more vigorous and should be at least 150 – 175 cm apart. Mulch the soil with compost and manure to provide nutrients, suppress weeds and keep roots cool.

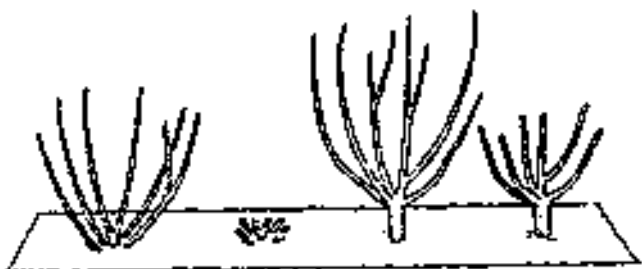
If supplemental nutrition is required, use a balanced fertilizer such as 20-20-20 in spring. Avoid using too much nitrogen since it produces excessive vegetative growth and do NOT use Muriate of Potash (0-0-60). It is preferable to improve the quality of your soil over time with compost and manure.

BLACK CURRANTS – are always planted deep (A1) to encourage new basal growth. Three-year-old stems are cut down to the ground in spring (A2).

Mulching helps retain moisture in the soil. Black Currants particularly like moist soil and do not like to be dry.

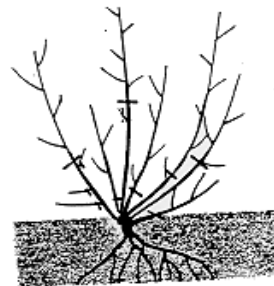


RED AND WHITE CURRANTS AND GOOSEBERRIES – can also be planted deep to form a stool and cut back to ground level at planting, or planted so that a four to six inch stem holds the plant above the ground (see illustration below). The stems are merely cut back to half at planting. Prune to outward facing buds. Do not provoke basal growth as is needed for Black Currants. Subsequent pruning of laterals encourage spur formation that will continue to bear fruit each year.



PRUNING CURRANTS

In spring, prune leaders by one-half to outward-pointing buds. Select any well-placed shoots to form permanent branches and cut back by one-half to outward-pointing buds. Cut back all other side-shoots. Remove any sucker shoots.

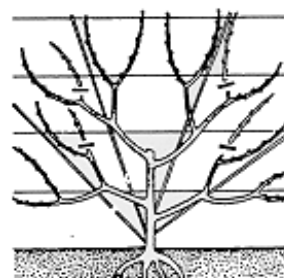


PRUNING GOOSEBERRIES

Cut back leaders by one-half, and cut back the laterals to 5 cm. Cut out all dead, damaged and diseased wood.

Fruits are carried on two-year-old shoots, and on any spurs that form on the wood that remains after the thinning out of unrequired shoots.

When the fruits are large enough for picking, thin the fruits by removing every other one. The remaining berries will be larger and sweeter.



ELDERBERRIES

The fruit of the native American Elderberry popular for pies, jellies, jams and homemade wine.

Plant elderberries in full sun or part shade in rich, moist well drained soil. They are easy to grow and relatively pest free.

Although elderberries are self-fruitful, the yield can be dramatically increased by planting other cultivars nearby, at least 2 metres apart. Feed with a high nitrogen fertilizer or blood meal.

Prune in spring by cutting out dead and congested branches. Older and less productive growth can be removed (about a quarter each year).





RASPBERRIES AND BLACKBERRIES

Raspberries and blackberries are closely related and similar in many respects. Generally, blackberries are less cold hardy but can tolerate considerably more heat.

Plants perform best in full sun in rich well-drained soil (pH 6.0 to 6.7). Use a mulch to conserve moisture, suppress weeds and keep roots cool. Composted manure is excellent for this purpose and also supplies nutrients.

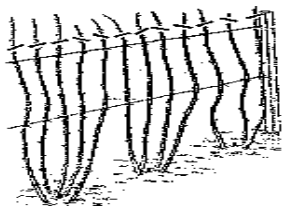
Raspberries and Blackberries benefit from being trained to a support, which makes the canes easier to manage, reduces fungal diseases and produces more berries which are easier to pick. Yields average about two pints per foot of row and as they do not all ripen at once, and a 3-metre row of plants is recommended.

Feeding is best accomplished with compost or other organic materials such as seaweed or fish emulsion. Avoid high nitrogen fertilizers.

Raspberries are either fall bearing (everbearing) or summer bearing. Everbearing varieties will fruit in the fall on the new canes produced this year. Summer bearing varieties require the removal of second-year canes after they have produced a crop.

Black and purple raspberries are summer bearing and unlike red raspberries do not sucker. DO NOT plant black or purple raspberries closer than 30 metres to red raspberries.

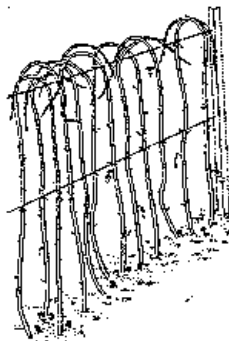
PRUNING RASPBERRIES IN SPRING



In spring, cut back the tips to five feet to encourage fruiting laterals.

PRUNING RASPBERRIES IN FALL

In fall or after harvest cut back all fruited canes to the ground. Tie in selected new canes 10 cm apart.



PRUNING BLACKBERRIES AND PURPLE OR BLACK RASPBERRIES

For blackberries as well as black and purple raspberries, cut off the tips of the canes in summer to increase the number of berries produced.

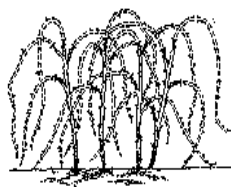


SECOND YEAR, OCTOBER

After fruiting and harvesting untie the fruited canes from the wire and cut them out completely. It is wise to wear heavy-duty gloves to protect your hands.

THIRD YEAR, SUMMER

As new rods appear train them along the wires in the opposite direction to the previous year's growth. Fruit is carried on laterals of last year's canes.



In late winter, cut the lateral branches of black and purple raspberries back to increase branching, which will increase yield.

Blackberries fruit on laterals that grow from the canes produced the previous year. Pruning is thus relatively simple, in that all that is necessary is the annual removal of the canes that have fruited and tree training-in of new young canes from the base of the plant.

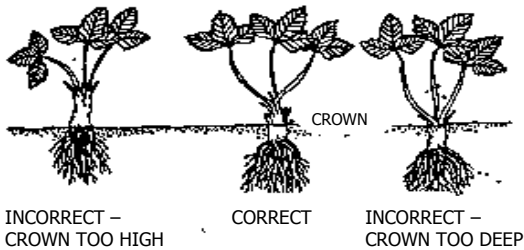


STRAWBERRIES

For ease of growing, strawberries rank highly among crops for the home garden. No ladders are required for picking and pruning and no stakes or arbours are required to support the plants.

Plant in full sun in deep, well drained yet moisture-retentive, slightly acidic soil (pH 6.0 – 6.5). A raised bed will ensure good drainage. Incorporate peat moss and composted manure into the soil. Do not plant in an area where raspberries, potatoes, tomatoes, peppers or eggplants have been grown in the past 5 years. Rows should be 90 –125 cm apart.

Strawberries are fussy about being planted just right. The mid-point of the crown should be at ground level.



June-bearing varieties planted in spring should have all their flower buds picked off before opening the first season; they will blossom and bear fruit the following summer.

With everbearing varieties, let blooms mature for a spring and fall crop each year.

Watering is critical and plants should not be allowed to wilt. Generally, strawberries require about 3 cm of water per week during the growing season.

Winter protection is required in our climate. Once the ground freezes in late fall cover the plants with a 15 cm mulch of straw.

BLUEBERRIES

Blueberries are hardy, vigorous, easy to grow and usually untroubled by insects or diseases.

They require an acidic (pH 4.5), organically rich and well-drained soil. Most soil in Southern Ontario is generally alkaline and will require amendment to increase acidity (use peat moss, sawdust, pine needles or composted oak or beech leaves). An ideal soil mix consists of 2 parts peat moss mixed with 1 part each of rich soil and coarse sand. Raised beds are excellent and recommended to provide drainage.

Blueberries are not dependably self-fruitful, so plant at least two or three varieties and space at least 150 cm apart.

To fertilize, use only products specifically formulated for acid loving plants such as 30-10-10. Avoid bone meal.



Pruning is easy and often not required. After a few years prune out older and less productive branches in spring. If the plant seems crowded, prune to open the interior for better plant health and easier access to berries.

Protect bushes before the berries turn blue with netting to foil birds. Don't pick blueberries as soon as they are blue but allow to ripen and sweeten for a week or two (they are not ripe if the stem ends are still red).

When pruning blueberries, first cut out twiggy growth and canes that are at least five years old. Then remove branches growing near the ground or crowding the center of the plant.



✦ HUMBER NURSERIES LTD.

Ontario's Largest Garden Centre

8386 Hwy 50, Brampton, Ontario L6T 0A5

Ph: 416-798-TREE (8733) Ph: 905-794-0555 Fax: 905-794-1311

www.humburnurseries.com humber@gardencentre.com

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