

Growing Raspberries in Montana



No other summer fruit grown in Montana can provide the exquisite flavor and high nutritional value of the raspberry. Raspberries are high in fiber, vitamin C and D and contain more calcium than any other temperate fruit. Raspberries can be used in a variety of appealing ways. Use the fruit to make delicious jams, jellies and pies or use them fresh in a variety of desserts. Raspberries make an excellent small fruit crop for the home gardener. Two years are required to establish a raspberry planting, but once established, the planting will remain productive for many years to come.



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Site Selection— Raspberries grow well on a wide range of soil types, provided they are deep and well drained. Raspberries require an abundant supply of water but the roots and crowns are extremely sensitive to excessive moisture in poorly drained soils. They will not tolerate “wet feet”. If your soil is heavy clay, it may be necessary to build an 18” deep raised bed to plant your raspberries in. Raspberries prefer a site with high soil organic matter, a PH between 5.5 and 7.0 and full sun. Select a site that has never previously been planted with tomatoes, potatoes, eggplants, peppers and other brambles to minimize the transfer of virus diseases.

Preparing the Ground— Unfortunately, raspberries are poor competitors. After choosing the best soil and site, be sure to destroy all perennial weeds with cultivation, herbicides, and/or a weed barrier. Cultivate the soil to a depth of 8-10” adding organic matter to the soil. Continue to cultivate the soil around the raspberry plants frequently enough to prevent grass and weeds from growing. Do this shallow enough as to not damage the roots.

Planting— Raspberries are sold by nurseries as bare root or containerized plants. Bare root plants should be planted 2” deeper than they grew in the nursery in the spring as soon as the soil can be worked. Be sure not to let the roots become dry or freeze. Water in the bare root stock well after planting and cut all canes off 1-2” above the ground to force root growth and strong cane development. Containerized plants are highly reliable and can be planted any time during the growing season. If planting a row system, place plants 24-30” apart in rows 5-8’ apart. For planting in hills, space the plants far enough apart each way so you can cultivate between them. Be sure to mulch your raspberry plants well to help retain moisture and to protect the roots in the winter.

Harvesting— Pick raspberries when they are dry and as soon as they separate easily from the clusters. At the peak of the season, they can be harvested 2 to 3 times a week. Handle berries very carefully and either place them in cold storage or use right away.

Fertilization— Raspberries require moderate levels of soil fertility. They respond well to additions of organic materials to the soil. Shortly after planting, a general application of fertilizer is recommended containing equal amounts of nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium. Use either a slow release fertilizer in early spring or, if using a quick-release fertilizer, apply half of the fertilizer in the early spring, just as growth is beginning and apply the second half at the beginning of bloom.

Irrigation— Raspberries need more moisture than most fruits. Most cultivars require about one inch of water per week during the growing season. Extreme warm and windy conditions make greater amounts of water necessary. The fruiting period is a critical irrigation time. Water less frequently in late summer and fall to slow down the growing process so the canes can become hardened off for the winter. Before the ground freezes in late fall, around the first of November, give them a good deep watering. This will prevent damage to the roots in the winter. Additional watering may be required during long dry spells in winter.

Pruning and Training— Proper pruning of raspberries makes picking easier and produces larger fruit. Sometimes canes will not support themselves, so a horizontal trellis made of posts and wire will give good support. Pruning techniques vary depending on the variety. **Fall bearing** raspberries fruit on new growth. They can be cut to the ground in fall or winter. **Summer bearing raspberries** fruit on 2 year old canes. In early spring, before new growth begins, remove any weak or damaged canes. Thin the remaining canes to 6-8 inches apart and remove any winter killed tips. After harvest, cut the fruit-bearing canes to the ground. Loosely tie the new canes to support wires. **Everbearing raspberries** bear fruit on the previous year’s canes in the summer and on the tips of first-year canes in the fall. In the spring, before new growth begins, remove any weak or damaged canes. Thin the remaining canes to 6-8 inches apart and snip off the old fruit cluster at the tips. After harvesting the summer crop, remove the canes that bore fruit down to the ground. Tie the remaining canes to the support wires.

Varieties We Carry

- **Autumn Britten** is a fall bearing raspberry which ripens 3 weeks before Heritage, bearing fruit from late summer through the fall. Berries are long and conical with a bright red color and a very good flavor. Good upright growth and quite vigorous. This raspberry fruits on new growth so it can be pruned to the ground in the fall or spring.
- **Anne Yellow** is a fall bearing, golden raspberry from the University of Maryland. Light yellow fruit is born on the top of sparsely thorned canes. Large, firm symmetrical berries have a mild-sweet flavor with an aromatic banana flavor developing in cooler climates. Ripens August through late September.

RECIPES

Courtesy of www.epicurious.com

Double-Berry Preserves

The wide surface of a large skillet reduces the cooking time, which helps keep the fruit flavor at its peak.

2 1-pint baskets strawberries, hulled, diced
1 1/2-pint basket fresh raspberries or 1 1/2 c. frozen
3/4 c. sugar

Combine all ingredients in heavy large skillet. Stir over low heat until sugar dissolves. Increase heat and boil until preserves are very thick, stirring frequently, about 10 minutes. Spoon into small bowl. Cover and refrigerate. (Can be prepared 1 week ahead. Keep refrigerated.) Makes 2 cups.

Raspberry Custard

6 Tbsp. Raspberry preserves
36 fresh raspberries or frozen unsweetened, thawed
1/2 c. sugar
2 eggs
2 egg yolks
2 tsp. vanilla extract
Pinch of salt
2 c. half and half

Preheat oven to 350°F. Place 1 tablespoon preserves, then 6 berries in each of six 3/4 cup custard cups or ramekins.

Whisk sugar, eggs, yolks, vanilla and salt to blend in medium bowl. Heat half and half over medium heat until tiny bubbles form around edge of pan. Gradually whisk half and half into egg mixture. Evenly divide custard mixture among cups with berries. Set cups into 13x9x2-inch baking pan. Pour enough hot water into baking pan to reach halfway up sides of cups.

Place pan with custards in oven; bake until custards are set in center, about 35 minutes. Remove custards from water and cool 10 minutes. Refrigerate at least 2 hours. (Can be made 1 day ahead. Cover and keep refrigerated.) Serves 6.

Raspberry Corn Muffins

Can be prepared in 45 minutes or less

1 c. yellow cornmeal	2 large eggs
1 c. all-purpose flour	1 1/4 c. plain yogurt
1/2 c. sugar	1/4 c. unsalted butter, melted
1 tsp. baking powder	and cooled
1 tsp. baking soda	1 c. fresh raspberries
1/4 tsp. salt	

Preheat oven to 375°F and butter well twelve 1/2-cup muffin tins. In a bowl whisk together the cornmeal, flour, sugar, baking powder, baking soda and salt. In another bowl whisk together the eggs, yogurt and butter; add flour mixture and stir batter until it is just combined. Fold in raspberries gently, divide the batter among the muffin tins and bake in the middle of the oven for 20 minutes, or until a tester comes out clean. Let the muffins cool in the tins on a rack for 3 minutes, turn them out onto the rack, and let them cool completely. The muffins may be made 1 day in advance and kept in an airtight container. Makes 12 muffins.

Tropical Chicken Salad

4 boneless chicken breasts	1 papaya, peeled, seeded,
1/4 c. olive oil	chopped
3 Tbsp. red wine vinegar	1 mango, peeled, pitted,
1 6-ounce basket raspberries	chopped
1 tsp. Dijon mustard	1 Tbsp. minced fresh mint
1/4 tsp. dried rubbed sage	1/2 c. chopped toasted walnuts
6 c. salad greens	

Preheat oven to 425°F. Place chicken in baking pan. Season generously with salt and pepper. Bake until cooked through, about 20 minutes. Cool; cut into bite-size pieces. Whisk olive oil, vinegar, mustard and sage in small bowl. Combine chicken, salad greens, papaya, mango, raspberries and mint in large bowl. Add dressing and toss well. Divide mixture among 4 plates. Sprinkle with walnuts and serve. Serves 4.

No-Bake Fresh Fruit Pie

Advance preparation: The pastry can be prebaked a day in advance. The filling should be made early in the day, and the pie filled and set to chill at least 3 hours before serving.

Filling: 4 cups any combination of fresh berries, picked over, washed and drained until dry, and/or cut-up fresh fruit. (try blueberries and peaches, raspberries and nectarines, blueberries and strawberries, plums and peaches with Marion berries or huckleberries; do not peel plums, nectarines or pears).

2/3 - 1 cup granulated sugar (depending on sweetness of fruit)
3 Tbsp. cornstarch
1 c. water
1 Tbsp. fresh lemon juice, or more as needed
2 Tbsp. unsalted butter

Prepare the pastry, roll it out, and line the pie plate. Prick the pastry bottom with a fork and chill until firm. Preheat the oven to 425°F. Completely blind-bake the shell.

In a food processor or using a fork, mash 1 1/2 cups of the cut-up mixed fruit or berries. Measure the sugar, cornstarch, and water into a saucepan and whisk until smooth. Stir in the mashed fruit and cook over medium-low heat for 7 to 10 min., or until the mixture is thick and clear. Stir in the lemon juice.

Taste the cooked sauce and correct the balance of sugar and lemon if necessary. Stir in the butter and all the remaining cut-up fresh fruit and berries. Firm fruits like apples or plums are best slightly mashed into the cooked sauce, while softer fresh fruits and berries should simply be stirred in. Chill until partially thickened, then spoon into the cooked pastry shell and chill for at least 3 hours to set. Serve with ice cream or sweetened whipped cream. Yield: One 9-inch pie; serves 6 to 8.



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