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Growing Raspberries

Soil – For best results, raspberries should be grown in a good, well-drained soil that is high in organic matter. Do not plant in the same soil in which tomatoes, potatoes, peppers or eggplants have been grown for several years. If needed, adding organic matter such as well-rotted stable manure, peat moss or composted manure is very beneficial and will help in preventing soil compaction. Soil pH should be 5.5 or 6.0. Work the soil to a depth of at least 8 inches.

Planting – Raspberries should be planted 2 to 3 feet apart in the row, with rows 4 feet or more apart. Set the plant into hole with the crown at soil level. Water thoroughly, a liquid plant starter can be applied at this time. . If rainfall is not adequate, water the plants frequently during the first six weeks. A layer of hardwood chips or mulch can be added for weed control. Do not use sawdust or pine needles.

Fertilizer – Adding stable manure each year will provide nitrogen and potassium. If manure is not available, a side dressing of 10-10-10 fertilizer can also be used at a rate of 1 lb. for every 100 foot row.

Disease Prevention – Raspberries are susceptible to viral disease and should not be planted near red raspberries, blackberries, wild raspberries, or older virus infected plants. If leaf spot develops, treat with fruit tree spray.

Training – Black raspberries should have the tip of the new cane pinched or cut off at 15” height the first year and 24” the following years. Inching causes the side branches, which produce fruit, to develop and strengthens the main cane.

New canes of RED raspberries are NOT cut back the first growing season. They should be cut back shortly before the leaves emerge in the second growing season. The amount of cane to be retained is determined by the support system used since red raspberries are not normally self-supporting. They can be made self-supporting by cutting several canes at 30” and tying them together. No more than 6 should be tied into each clump. Tie them at a height of 20” and again at 28”. This will, however, remove the early maturing fruit.

Pruning – Black raspberries are produced on last year’s growth. While this old growth is bearing fruit, new shoots will emerge from base of plant. After harvest cut back all the old canes. Everbearing red varieties produce fruit on the tip of the new canes in August and September, and a June crop the following summer on the lower section of the same cane. The tip of the cane that produced fruit in the fall is removed the following March, leaving the remaining portion for the June crop. These canes can then be tied together as described above, and then be removed after harvest. New canes that emerge in the spring will again provide the fall crop.

Winter Protection – Winter injury can be reduced by bending new canes over in November and holding them near the ground with wire fencing. A light layer of straw will also help.