

Time to Prune Raspberries

Raspberries are members of a group we call brambles. Brambles are a prickly shrub of the genus *Rubus*. This definition covers a large number of plants found growing in woods and fields. The berries grow on canes that are classed as either erect or trailing. Each raspberry is actually a formation of several small fruits or drupelets attached to a central core that is left behind on the plant when the berry is picked. Raspberries have small fine hairs that help hold the individual small fruits together.

Raspberries may be classified by fruit color and/or fruiting habit. They may be red, black, purple, or yellow-fruited types. The red raspberry is the first to ripen, followed by the black, purple, and yellow cultivars. Red raspberries tend to be more cold hardy.

Red raspberries are ripe when they are totally red and can easily be removed from the plant. The berries ripen at different times so plants need to be harvested several times over the course of a few weeks. If you notice berries ripening on the canes but no ripe fruit you might be dealing with various animals that like raspberries and need to take preventive measures so that you have ripe fruit.

Raspberries may be classified as summerbearing or everbearing. Summerbearing cultivars produce one crop in the early summer, while everbearing cultivars can produce up to two crops a year, one crop being produced in the spring and the second crop in the fall.

Pruning raspberries depends on the type

June-bearing (Summer) red raspberries do not need summer pruning (except for spent floricanes removal). March is the best time to prune in West Virginia because any cane dieback from cold will be apparent; however, raspberries can be dormant pruned any time canes are fully dormant. In the dormant season, thin canes to 6 to 8 inches between canes, and top remaining canes to 48 to 60 inches in height, removing about one-fourth of the cane. Be sure to retain those canes with the largest diameter.

Black and purple raspberries require summer topping throughout the summer in addition to floricanes removal. Black and purple raspberries should be topped at 36 inches, removing 3 to 4 inches of new growth. Do this two to three times during the season to top all of the canes as they grow. Topping encourages the development of lateral (fruiting) branches and increases the strength of the cane. For dormant pruning, remove all dead, damaged, and weak canes. Thin remaining canes to five to ten canes per plant. Lateral branches should be headed back to 4 to 7 inches (for blacks) or 6 to 10 inches (for purples). More vigorous plants can support longer lateral branches. All canes should be topped to 36 inches if they were not topped earlier. Everbearing red (or gold) raspberries should be mowed to a height of 1 to 2 inches in the early spring. A trellis can help make the crop easier to manage and keep the canes off the ground so that berries are cleaner and easier to pick.

Sources: Fruit Production for the Home Gardener, The Pennsylvania State University Raspberries for the Backyard Fruit Planting, The Ohio State University <http://ohioline.osu.edu/hyg-fact/1000/1421.html>

March 10 Ag Education Dinner Meeting

The March 10th speaker will be Dr. Emmitt Rawls, an Extension Specialist from the University of Tennessee. Rawls will discuss the feeder cattle market outlook and some risk management strategies farmers can use in these volatile economic times. He does weekly cattle market updates on his website to keep producers up to date on marketing changes. Dr. Rawls, a Ph.D. graduate of Virginia Tech, is a professor in the Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics at the University of Tennessee. He devotes his Extension program towards assisting livestock producers to make informed decisions regarding production and marketing alternatives. He has also directed his efforts towards assisting beef producers in adding value to their cattle through preconditioning programs in which cattle are source and age verified and marketed in uniform truckload lots for higher prices. Dr. Rawls is a devoted believer in price risk management for livestock and feed and has obtained grant funding to support educational programs in this area. His weekly comments on the cattle market and the Market Highlights are widely used across the state and region. The March 10 dinner meeting will be at 6:30 p.m. at the WVU Kearneysville Tree Fruit Research and Education Center.

Peace Corps Turns 50

March 1 marked the 50th Anniversary of Peace Corps. The Peace Corps was established by John F. Kennedy as one of his first presidential acts. In the 50 years since it was established over 200,000 Americans have served in 139 countries across the world. I had the privilege of serving as a Peace Corps volunteer in Brazil where I worked in agriculture due to my experience of growing up on a dairy farm. I gained an appreciation for other cultures and ways of life as well as the importance of helping others which carries over to the present. There is a newly formed group of Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs) in West Virginia and the Peace Corps Masters International was launched in West Virginia with Dr. Todd Petty, associate professor of Wildlife & Fisheries Resources, Division of Forestry & Natural Resources at WVU serves as director of this program. Happy Birthday Peace Corps!

Forum for Rural Innovation: New Approaches for Agriculture and Rural Prosperity

The seventh annual Forum for Rural Innovation will be held Friday, March 11, 2011 at the Best Western Lee-Jackson Motor Inn & Conference Center in Winchester, Virginia. The purpose of the Forum is to showcase new and exciting projects and programs that enhance farm or rural business profitability. This year's Forum will focus on local and regional food production, marketing, and distribution. Richard Pirog, from the world renowned Leopold Center in Ames, Iowa will describe their innovative work to support regional food systems, and the economic impacts of food systems. Also learn how West Virginia is addressing food systems on a statewide basis; hear the challenges of supplying large volume retailers; learn what it takes to transition into medium scale production of fruits and vegetables; and jump into social media as a marketing tool with Facebook. A registration fee of \$40.00 per person will include the forum program, morning refreshments, and the buffet lunch featuring local foods. Registration information is available on-line at www.loudounfarms.org or by calling 703-777-0426. Pre-registration by March 4th is required. The Forum for Rural Innovation is a cooperative educational effort by the offices of Agricultural Economic Development and Cooperative Extension in Clarke, Fauquier, Frederick and Loudoun, counties of Virginia, Berkeley and Jefferson counties, West Virginia, Potomac Headwaters and Shenandoah RC&D, Virginia Cooperative Extension and WVU Extension.

Farmer Appreciation Breakfast

The Berkeley County Farm Bureau is holding a complimentary Farmer Appreciation Breakfast on Saturday, March 19, 2011 from 7:30 am to 10:00 am at the Bill Butler Farm located on the Arden Nollville Road, Inwood. Please RSVP by March 10 by calling 304-274-3058 or 304-229-5968.

Gardening 101 Program offered

The Berkeley-Jefferson Master Gardeners will hold a Gardening 101 Workshop for beginning gardeners on Saturday, March 26, 2011 from 9:00 am until 2:00 pm at the Berkeley County youth fairgrounds located in Martinsburg. Registration will be limited to 100 participants. Please use the registration form found at www.berkeleyextension.com to reserve a space for the program. For more information see the brochure on the Agriculture/Gardening section of our website or call 304-264-1936.

Garden Tips

- Prune raspberries and fruit trees
- Build a high tunnel
- Seed leaf lettuce and spinach (indoors)
- Seed tomatoes and peppers (indoors)

Until next time ... Until next time ...Happy Gardening, and Farming!

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