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Black Raspberries and Blackberries

By A. P. Stevenson



A. P. STEVENSON.

The black raspberries are not so well known nor so generally cultivated as the red varieties. This is to be regretted as the flavor and quality of this fruit is much superior to any red variety. There is no question that the lack of interest in the growing of this fine fruit arises from a want of knowledge of its management. Our own experience in growing this fruit on our farm during the past 25 years has been quite successful. In outlining this let me say in the beginning that all black raspberry or black cap canes require winter protection in this country, all varieties being too tender to give good crops without, and we advise any one desirous of growing this fruit to keep this important fact in mind, otherwise his efforts will be likely to end in failure.

Getting The Plants Started

The preparation of the soil should be the same as for the red and yellow varieties. Plow in a good coating of well-rotted manure deeply the year previous to planting.

In starting a new plantation get plants that are one and one-half years old, and plant in rows nine feet apart and two feet apart in the row. It will be noticed as the season advances the young shoots grow up straight but later they begin to fend over the tip of the canes pointing downward or toward the ground. If conditions are favorable these tips will take root in the ground during late summer, and form a new plant, but on account of our dry windy climate it is advisable to throw some earth on the tips to insure a good crop of young plants. These form a mass of white roots with a bud or crown in the centre and should be left in the ground for a year before transplanting out. Sometime in the early part of October cut the connection between the cane and the tip plant leaving about six inches showing above the ground. This will mark where the young plant has taken root. With a pair of leather gloves gather the canes together, bend down to the ground and cover with earth. Straw or manure should not be used as it will harbor mice. In early May uncover and with a fork raise up the canes and level the ground being careful not to disturb the young tip plants rooted the fall previous. These should be dug up the following spring and transplanted where desired.

It is usually the third year before the plantation is at its best and like the red varieties the roots are perennial and the tops are biennial, that is the fruit grows on canes that grew the previous season after which the canes soon die and should be removed just previous to bending down and covering the canes that are to produce fruit the following summer.

We have tried a large number of varieties on our farm. These have all been discarded with the exception of the following which we have found gives best results:

Older—This is the all round best variety we have tried. It is of low-growing pendulous habit, on this account the canes are easily bent down and covered for winter protection. The fruit is large, jet black, juicy, sweet, and of fine quality.

Hilborn—This is another variety we have found to be well adapted to our condition. It is more upright in habit of growth than the Older. The fruit is quite black, and of fine size and quality, and very productive.

Shaffer's Colonial—This is one of the best known of the purple tip varieties. It grows immense crops of dark purplish red fruit, soft and juicy, the canes are strong upright growers. On this account it is difficult to bend the canes to give the necessary winter protection, and on this account is not so desirable for general planting.

Blackberries

Generally speaking, the growing of this fruit in this country has not been of an

encouraging nature. Perhaps the difficulty in management together with the tendency of the fruit to ripen too late in the fall will account in some degree for the poor success in growing this fruit. Blackberry canes require winter protection with us. This is given in the same manner as with the black raspberry but are more difficult to manage on account of the large hooks on the canes. The two varieties are sometimes confounded, but are of entirely different species, the blackberries in habit of growth and propagation being the same as the red or suckering varieties of raspberries.

Our chief difficulty in growing this fruit on the farm was its lateness in ripening, the frost usually spoiling the crop before fully ripe. Of late years we have been growing a variety named Agawam, that ripens its fruit in good time. The blackberry is one of the finest of fruits, but should never be picked before it is fully ripe. Spring planting is the proper time, and strong one-year suckers should be used and the rows should be eight feet apart. In the second year cut back the side laterals on new shoots made that year. This will facilitate the bending down of the canes for winter protection.

Dewberries

The dewberry is closely related to the blackberry, the chief difference being the trailing habit of the dewberry and its manner of propagation which is from tips the same as the black raspberry. The fruit of the dewberry is as good in quality as any of the blackberries and is cultivated much the same as the black raspberry, requiring winter protection, which on account of its trailing habit is easily given. This habit is so pronounced that for best results the vines should be tied up to stakes about three feet long, in the spring, as soon as the winter covering is removed. Our plan of cultivation is to plant four feet apart each way. As to varieties suitable to our conditions, we have only succeeded with a variety named the Windom. This has given us some fair crops of fine fruit. The Lauretia, a well known eastern variety, is of no value with us.

WINTERING BEES

Bees can be wintered either in a cellar or in specially constructed cases outside. The bees should be brought into a cellar soon after the last good cleansing flight they are likely to get. If the cellar is used, it should be well ventilated, dark, fairly dry and mouse proof. The temperature should be kept between 40 and 50 degrees F. For a small number of colonies a corner of the basement of the owner's residence can be partitioned off for this purpose. For large apiaries specially constructed cellars are desirable.

For outside wintering, the individual or quadruple cases can be used; in both cases about two to six inches of packing is required. The entrance of the case should be reduced to one and a half inches high and three-eighths of an inch wide; this can be regulated by a revolving. After the last of March, all snow should be removed from the front of the case.

Feeding in Emergency

If the bees run short of stores in the early spring through neglect to leave, or supply a sufficient quantity in the autumn, or through excessive consumption of unwholesome stores, it will be necessary to resort to feeding. The safest food to give them while still wintering, is candy.

This is the best time to prepare all necessary supplies for the following summer. All combs should be carefully stored away in some cool place to prevent injuries from the wax moth; 25 degrees of frost will destroy the larvae of this pest. They should also be protected from mice and other pests. New frames should be made up and wired ready to receive foundation. In fact, all equipment should be thoroughly gone over and made ready to receive next season's honey crop.



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