

Massachusetts Master Gardener Association

FACT SHEET



Have Gardening Questions? The **Master Gardener Help Line Hours** are 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. on Fridays (all year) as well as Wednesdays (March-November) and Mondays (April-October).

Phone: 617-933-4929 Email: mghelpline@masshort.org.

Backyard Berries – Red Raspberries

Grow your own raspberries. They are naturally sweet and bursting with flavor. They are also antioxidants and anti-inflammatory. Growing your own is more economical and they will be free from pesticide residues.

Need: Red raspberry plant(s)

Space outdoors with sun or a container at least 12 inches in diameter

Shovel

Stakes or trellis

1. Purchase plants from a reputable nursery. There are two types of red raspberry cultivars. Summer-bearing cultivars produce canes that are biennial, growing one year and producing fruit the next. Fall-bearing cultivars produce canes that bear fruit on the top portion of the current season's growth in late summer and fall. If you leave these canes for next year, they will bear fruit on the portions that did not fruit the previous fall. For both a summer and fall crop, choose both types of cultivar.

2. Choose a sunny garden spot avoiding a site where potatoes, tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, cranberries, or strawberries have grown in the past three years. These crops are susceptible to the same insects and diseases. Raspberries grow best in a well-drained, fertile, loam soil with moderate water-holding capacity and a pH of 6.0 to 6.5. In the spring, dig a hole slightly larger than the root ball. Set the plant in the hole at the same depth it grew in the container or up to two inches deeper. Back fill with soil and water thoroughly. If you are planting more than one, you can either plant them in a hedgerow or hill planting system. In the hedgerow system, space the red raspberry plants 2 to 3 feet apart in the row with rows 6 to 8 feet apart. A hill planting system is not a mound of soil but is a cluster of canes that develop around a single plant. As the raspberries get taller they need support. You can either use stakes or a trellis.

3. If using a container, it should be at least 12 inches in diameter. Fill with acidic potting mix.

4. Fertilizer should be applied twice a year with a 10-10-10 gardening fertilizer. Apply initially as the plants begin to bloom in order to stimulate plant growth, increase berry size and increase the total amount of berries produced. After fruit harvest, the plants should be fertilized again. This will stimulate cane growth for the next season. For every 100 feet of row, you will use ten pounds of fertilizer per season (five pounds at blooming time and another five pounds after harvest).

5. Plants need an inch of water a week. If there is not sufficient rain you will need to water them.

6. Pruning schedule:

Summer-bearing – In the spring/summer, remove canes that grow between hills or in aisles. In the summer, remove the old canes after you have picked all the fruit. In the winter, remove weak canes. Thin remaining canes to 10 to 12 per hill or 4 to 5 per foot of hedgerow. Top the canes to 5½ feet tall.

Fall-bearing – If you are growing plants for an early summer and a fall crop, remove old canes after the summer crop has been harvested. The fall crop will be borne on the tips of cane that grew that season. When plants are dormant, remove weak canes and portions of canes that fruited last fall. Thin remaining canes to 10 to 12 per hill or 4 to 5 per foot of hedgerow. Top the canes to 5½ feet tall. The summer crop will be borne on the base of canes that fruited the previous fall. Remove these canes after picking the fruit. If you grow them for only a fall crop, cut all canes to ground level when the plants are dormant.

7. You may need to cover your crops with netting to keep the birds from eating them.

8. Pick the berries every 3 to 4 days. When the berries are ripe, they can be pulled off the receptacle easily.

9. Enjoy the fruits of your labor!

The Massachusetts Master Gardener Association is a non-profit organization whose mission is to share knowledge and experience with the public through outreach programs in education, horticulture and gardening; to provide the Master Gardener Training Program to interested members of the public; and to provide graduates of the Master Gardener Training Program with educational and practical opportunities to extend their knowledge and interests in gardening and related topics. <http://www.massmastergardeners.org/>