

Trailing Blackberries

Rubus species

Cultural Requirements: Blackberries will thrive on most soil types, but good drainage is desirable with most varieties. Soils that are naturally fertile, easily worked, and of good moisture holding capacity are the most suitable. While not as cold hardy as the raspberry, many varieties of blackberries are known to do well in large areas of Eastern Oregon.

Fertility: Blackberries respond extremely well to balanced commercial blends of fertilizer applied at blossoming time. Blackberries also thrive on organic fertilizers such as barn yard manure.

Good soil moisture should be maintained by irrigation at least for the first year after planting, and fruit production will benefit if irrigation is practiced up until the fall rains in following years.

Planting Instructions: One year old tips should be planted in March or April. Two year old transplants may be planted earlier. Plant the transplants at about the same depth the plant grew at the nursery, covering any white sprouts arising from the crown. Avoid wadding the roots in the planting hole, pruning them back if necessary. Avoid pruning of roots on thornless varieties as they may give rise to thorny suckers if so treated.

Pruning and Training: As the new canes begin growing along the ground in the Spring, they may be moved in alongside the row from time to time to keep them out of harms way until they are ready to be trained. These canes will not bear fruit until the following summer when they are two years old. After harvest, the two year old fruiting canes are removed as close to the ground as possible without injuring the new canes.

In mild climates like the Willamette Valley, many of the hardier varieties may be trained to stakes or trellises in late summer or early fall after the fruiting canes have been removed. The one year old canes are easier to handle in the fall as opposed to the following spring, and if trained well ahead of the first hard frost, they will mature better than canes left to lie on the ground through the winter. The Thornless Evergreen is an exception as it is harvested late and must be spring trained.

In cold climates, Spring training is a must as canes left on the ground over winter are less apt to be damaged by cold. The ideal time to spring train is after the danger of freezing weather and before the leaf buds begin expanding.

Several systems are used in training trailing blackberries. The simplest for the home gardener is a stake with a cross arm about five feet high. Canes should be brought up either directly from the ground or spiraled around the stake and held in place with two or three ties of strong twine. Twine may not be necessary if canes are looped over the cross arm and the ends twined into the canes below.

Various innovative methods of training are used with wire trellises. The most common trellis has two wires, one five feet high and the other three feet high. The canes to be trained are divided into two parts, and each taken separately to the top wire, and then the canes are brought down to the lower wire and turned back toward the plant with one or two twists. Excess cane length can be removed.

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Thornless Boysen: Developed in California. Very large, sweet, juicy, full-bodied flavor. Good for fresh eating, freezing, jams, preserves, pastries, juice, syrup, and wine. Too soft for shipping. Ripens during May and June. Thornless forms of all blackberries should not be cultivated deeply as damaged feeder roots will send up an occasional sticky sucker that has to be removed. Requires winter protection below 0 degrees F., hardy in zones 5-9.

Boysenberry: The Boysen originated in California and introduced in 1923. Very large, non-shiny, dark maroon berries. Soft, very juicy flesh. The Boysen has a distinctive, rich, tangy flavor and very aromatic. Excellent for eating fresh, juice, freezing, canning, pastries, and preserves. Ripens about July 1, and are among the largest of the small fruits. Vigorous, trailing vines. Boysenberries are hardy to approximately -10 degrees F. without protection. Hardy in zones 6-9.

Youngberry: Originating in Louisiana, the Young is very similar to the Boysen except it ripens earlier and the berries are milder and less acid than the Boysen. Fruit size is the same as Boysen but a little firmer and shiny. Excellent flavor, good for fresh eating, freezing, canning, and juice. The Youngberry rivals the Boysen in fruit production for the home gardener. Zone 5-9

Waldo: Thornless. Late, high yielding fruits on plant with vigorous, trailing, canes. Fruits are produced at the ends of canes and are easy to pick but can sunburn in high heat areas. Waldo will remain thornless, even from the suckers. Bred in Corvallis at Oregon State University. Zone 7-9

Kotata: Released from Oregon State University. Recommended for commercial growers and shows potential for machine harvesting. Large, firm, good tasting fruit. Good quality, good for canning, desserts, and jams. Firmer than Marion with the same appearance, jet black and large. Yields heavier than Marion and canes are not quite as brittle as Marion. Zone 6-9

Marionberry: Developed for Western Washington and Oregon. Named after Marion County, Oregon. Originated in Oregon as a cross between the Chehalem and Olallie Blackberries. Its berries are large, bright black, and excellent flavored. Recommended for fresh eating, jams, preserves, and desserts. Vigorous, thorny plant, strong canes and thrifty cane production. Ripens in July and early August along with the Boysenberry. Seeds are 1/7 the size of Boysen. Marion is popular commercially and is possibly hardier than Boysen. Zone 6-9

Olallie: Developed in Oregon, but produces extremely well in California where the lack of day length and cold limit the productivity of some blackberries. Large, shiny, firm black berries. Sweet with some wild blackberry flavor. Vigorous and productive trailing thorny canes. Ripens in July. Good for fresh eating, jams and freezing. Zone 6-9

Thornless Black Satin: Released on the East Coast; USDA tested. Large, firm, glossy black berries. Sweet flavor and excellent quality for jams, jellies, fresh eating and pastries. Heavy yields, semi erect, thornless vines that does not give rise to the occasional sticky cane like so many of the other thornless blackberry types. Highly resistant to Septoria Leaf Spot and Anthracnose. Also mildew tolerant. Excellent in the Pacific Northwest. Winter hardy in the Midwest and South. Ripens in July. Hardy to approximately -15 degrees F. and in zones 5-9.

Thornless Hull: East Coast release, introduced in 1982. Large, firm, delicious flavored sweet berries that do not lose color on hot sunny days. Good for eating fresh, jams, jellies, juices and pies. Very vigorous, thornless, semi erect canes. Ripens during July. Performs quite well in the Pacific Northwest. Hardy in zones 5-8.

Thornless Chester: Thornless variety. Large, sweet, high quality berries with good flavor. Excellent for fresh eating, jams, jellies, and pies. Flowers same time as the Hull Blackberry, but ripen about 10 days later. The Chester is most resistant to Cane Blight caused by *Botryosphaeria Dothidea*. Performs well in the deep South. Will not soften or lose color on hot, sunny days. Ripens in August. Hardy in Zones 5-7 but could be worth a try in zones 8-9.

Thornless Loganberry: Originating in California, the Logan is thought to be a natural cross between a California native blackberry and a red raspberry. The berries are long, large, dark red, acid, and highly flavored. The Logan is often used for pies, juice and wine. Not as widely grown commercially as it once was. There is high demand for it in the home garden due to its desirable flavor. Thornless canes; average yields. Hardiness is similar to Boysen. Zone 5-9

Lockness: Thornless. Patented variety from the National Seed Development Organization in Scotland. Lockness should become one of the very best all time thornless blackberries for the home garden. Unlike many other types of blackberries, Lockness does not produce thorny canes from root system. Lockness is truly thornless. It is extremely productive. Lockness has similar genealogy to Black Satin, Hull, and Chester, but Lockness is a much better tasting berry and has real gourmet quality. Canada's top small fruit specialist has tested Lockness at British Columbia Abbotsford Fruit Testing Station and gives it the highest rating for a berry of this type. Zone 5-8

Tayberry: Introduced by Scottish Horticultural Research Institute. Named after the River Tay in Scotland. Tayberry was bred from a cross between the blackberry Aurora, a high quality variety bred in Oregon, USA and an improved Tetraploid Raspberry from

the breeding program at the Scottish Corp. Research Institute. Tayberry is ready for picking from early July through mid August. Long, moderately vigorous canes. Berries are large, long conical shape and a reddish purple color with excellent, slightly aromatic flavor. Excellent quality for freezing, canning, jams, and jellies. Tayberry has shown considerable promise for the fresh fruit and processing markets.

Zone 5-8

Black Butte: A newly named Cultivar from the Oregon State/USDA-ARS program. This variety has a very large, good flavored fruit. It will probably be best suited for home garden and local fresh market. This variety probably requires chilling (not good for southern and central valley California) and is not winter hardy. Zone 7-9

Sylvan: 1984 release from Australia is the result of a cross between Marion and a Boysenberry hybrid. This variety fruits one week earlier than Kotata and is more upright than Marion. Fruit flavor is excellent. Zone 6-9

Siskiyou: Tested as orus 830-4, selected from the cross of ORUS 2027 (Ollalie x ORUS 1367) x ORUS 1826 (ORUS 1122 x 'Boysen') 'Siskiyou' is outstanding in its vigor, disease resistance and winter tolerance. Canes are more thorny than Marion but less than Kotata. Fruits are very large, firm and excellent flavored, produced early in the season before Kotata and with Black Butte. Yields have been similar to Kotata, less than Marion and greater than Black Butte. Zone 5-8.

Triple Crown Blackberry: Triple crown is a joint release from USDA-Beltsville and the Pacific West Agricultural Research Service. The plant is semi-erect and thornless and bears large, flavorful fruit. Early trials indicate that it may ripen earlier than Chester, and is similar to Chester in winter hardiness. Triple Crown would be a good choice to help extend the blackberry season for home gardeners, U-pick, and farm stands. Zone 5-7.