



Pruning Brambles in the Home Garden

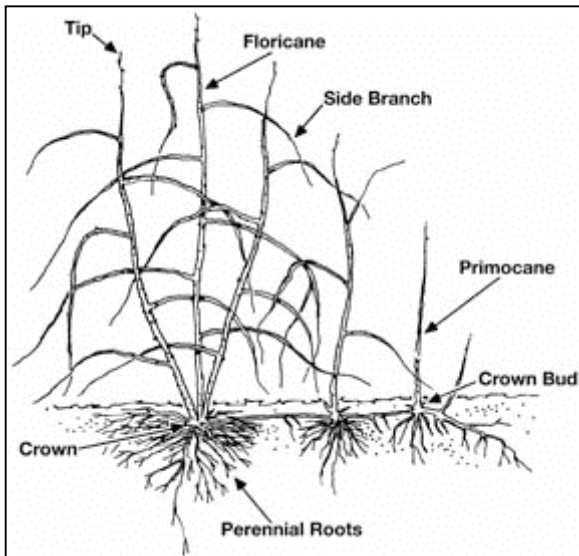
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Fact Sheet: SF-HH01

Introduction

Growing raspberries and other bramble fruits in the home garden is a very popular activity. Fresh, ripe berries picked from the backyard raspberry patch are a true treasure. In addition to being highly flavorful, many people find them desirable for health benefits as well. As with many fruits, raspberries contain high levels of various antioxidants and other beneficial compounds.

Once established, raspberry plants require regular attention to keep them healthy and producing well. Weed and pest management are important aspect of maintaining a productive raspberry patch. Annual pruning is also a key activity for keeping raspberries productive. This fact sheet is intended to help home fruit growers gain a better understanding of the principles of pruning raspberries and other bramble fruit.



Why is pruning important?

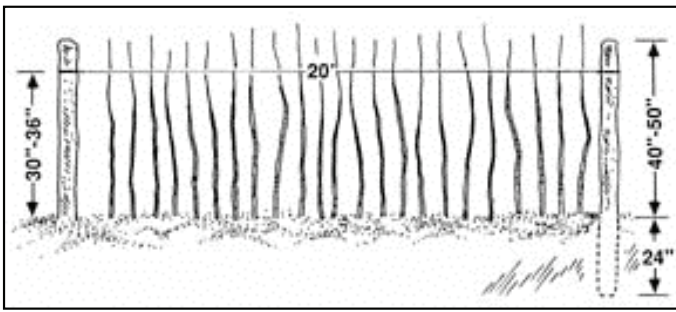
Brambles are plants with a biennial growth habit. This means that canes are produced in one year (called primocanes), overwinter, and then flower and fruit in the second year (then called floricanes). After floricanes fruit, they are no longer needed by the plant and will die back. Removal of these spent floricanes is the first step in pruning brambles.

What are the steps to successfully prune raspberries?

Understanding of the goals of pruning will help guide how you prune your raspberries. The primary goal of is to generate optimal fruit production.

Raspberries produce fruit on floricanes (except fall-bearing types) so removing 'spent' floricanes after harvest and correctly managing primocanes results in productive plants. Secondly, you want to create good conditions for fruit production and ripening. An open growth habit for raspberry rows allows for good air circulation and drying





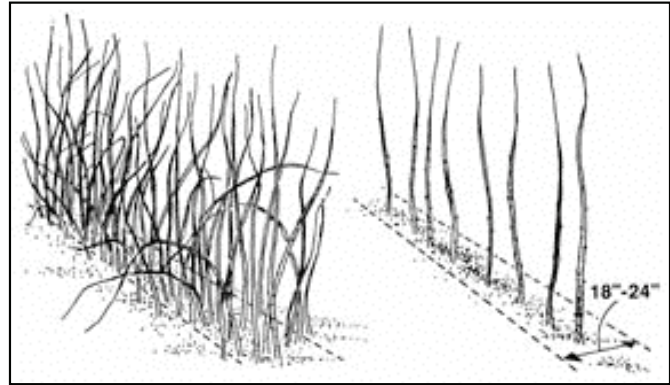
conditions which helps reduce the incidence of fruit rots. This also allows for sunlight penetration into the fruiting zone and promotes ripening and heightens flavor.

Types of Brambles:

Summer bearing types, including red, black, purple, yellow raspberries and blackberries all fruit on 2nd year canes.

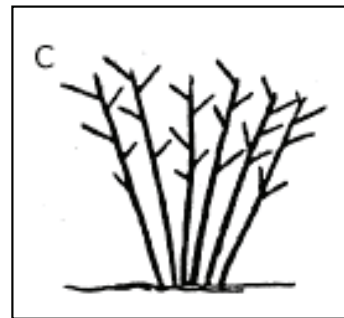
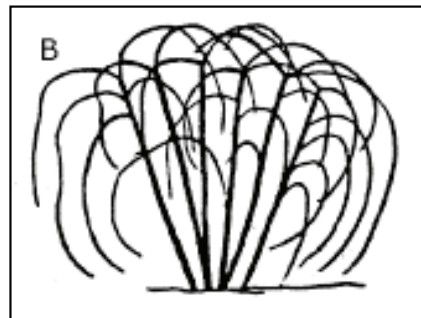
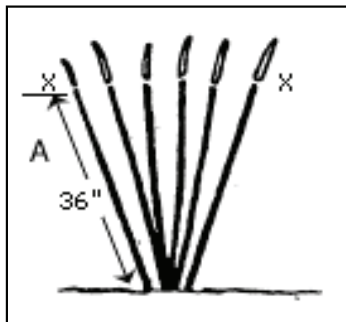
Steps in pruning summer bearing raspberries:

- 1) remove spent floricanes (fall - winter)
- 2) thin remaining primocanes to 6-8" apart, weed out spindly or broken canes, keep healthy robust canes (March)
- 3) re-establish 12-18" row width (March or later)
- 4) top remaining canes to 5" above top trellis wire (48 - 60")



Steps in pruning blackberries:

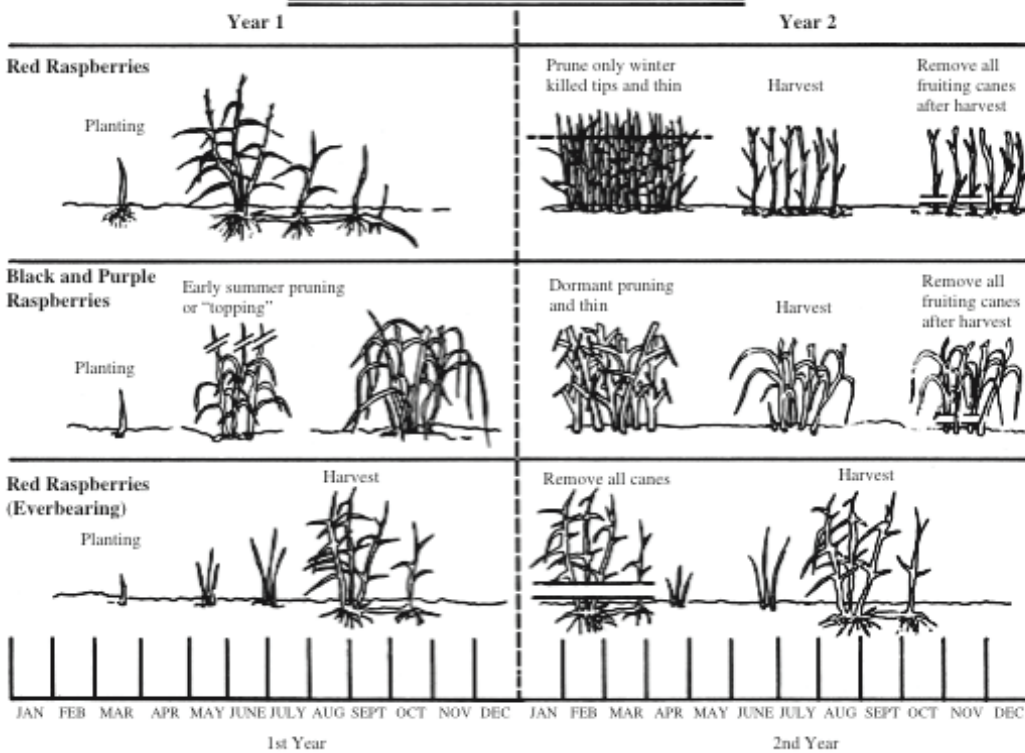
- 1) tip primocanes in summer (A) to promote growth of laterals (B); leave at least 6" above top trellis wire (summer)
- 2) remove spent floricanes (fall - winter)
- 3) thin remaining canes to 5-10 canes per plant; remove spindly/damaged canes first (March)
- 4) head back laterals (C) to 6-8" (March)
- 5) adjust overall height of canes to 6" above top trellis wire (March)



Steps in pruning fall bearing raspberries:

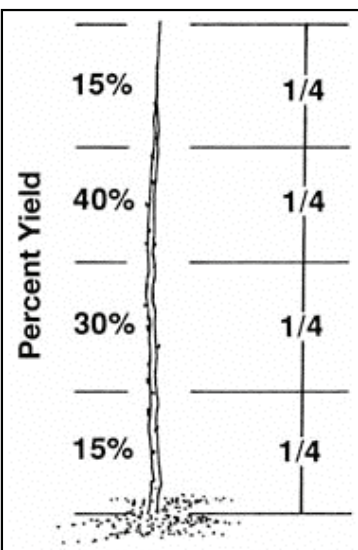
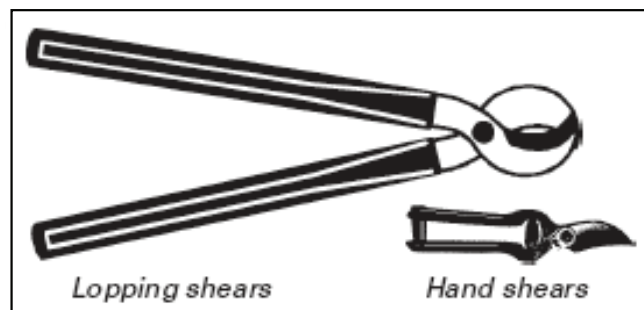
- 1) mow all canes to 2 - 3" from the ground.

PRUNING SCHEDULE



What are the tools used for pruning?

Hand tools such as loppers and hand pruners can be used for pruning raspberries. All tools should be sharp and clean at the outset. Select the appropriate tool to remove wood as cleanly as possible to avoid unnecessary injury to the plant. Leather gardening gloves are also recommended to prevent thorns from injuring or irritating bare hands.



Summary

Learning to master the art and science of pruning raspberries takes time and practice. Contact your University Extension Educator for updated information on pruning. Make sure your raspberries are pruned each year to keep them healthy and to maximize fruit production and increase the overall fruit quality.

Illustrations from PennState Small Scale Fruit Production Guide used by permission.