



## ***Berries 101***

By: Dan Alexander

May 2021

- **Strawberries**

- Requirements:
  - Full Sun (6 hours)
  - Good Drainage
  - High Soil Fertility + Calcium
  - Even Watering
- Helpful:
  - Mulch to retain water
  - Keep berries off soil
  - Do not plant with tomatoes/peppers/potatoes or eggplant (Solanaceae).
- Availability:
  - Organic starts are difficult to obtain and not often available.
  - Starts begin to be available in early Spring but sometimes sell out, to become available again in late Spring.
  - Usually available in six-packs and individual small pots.
- Concepts:
  - June Bearing
    - Heavy first crop around May/June, then sporadic production through Summer
    - Varieties: Chandler, Allsweet
  - Ever Bearing
    - Produces two crops: Spring and Fall
    - Varieties: Eversweet, Ozark Beauty, Quinalt
  - Daylight Neutral
    - Few runners on Daylight Neutral varieties.
    - Even production throughout the season.
    - Varieties: Albion, Seascape
  - Wild, Alpine or Forest strawberries
    - Small fruit with intense flavor
    - Variety: Fraises de Bois
  - French hybrid:

- Retains some wild strawberry intensity
    - Variety: Mara des Bois
  - Pests and Diseases:
    - Blossom end rot caused by lack of calcium
    - Snails/slugs, controllable with Sluggo.
    - Earwigs, controllable with Sluggo Plus.
    - Rodents – use repellants, netting, traps, etc.
    - Birds are not usually a problem, but netting will be helpful if Orioles suddenly get a hankering.
- **Blueberries**
  - Requirements:
    - Full sun (6 hours)
    - Good Drainage
    - Organic matter in the soil
    - Acid soil: Use an acidic soil amendment (usually packaged for Azaleas, Camellias, Rhododendrons, Gardenias).
    - Low nitrogen
    - Summer through fall irrigation.
    - Use fertilizers packaged for acid loving plants.
    - Can use Sul/Po/Mag or Soil Sulphur to acidify (use with care, can overdo it).
    - Avoid fertilizers with nitrate from nitrogen.
  - *Wild Blueberries (lowbush)*
    - Grown in Eastern Canada and the Northeastern United States but not in the West.
  - *Northern Highbush Blueberries*
    - Grown in Oregon, Washington and colder regions of California.
    - In the Bay Area we do not have enough winter chill to provide good crops from Northern highbush varieties.
  - *Southern Highbush Blueberries*
    - Developed to produce in warmer climates like ours, requiring fewer chilling hours in Winter.
    - Different varieties have slightly different production times through the season, though the differences are minimal.
    - Selected Varieties
      - Misty –Early, one of the original Southern Highbushes, excellent flavor.
      - O'Neal – Early, generally rated one of the best in flavor.
      - Jubilee – Midseason
      - Sharpblue – Nearly evergreen with a long season, short dormant period.
      - Southmoon – Mid to Late, Grows very upright.
      - Sunshine Blue – Early, lovely pink-tinged flowers, compact growth habit good for containers.

- Emerald – Mid-season, large berries.
    - Jellybean dwarf/Peach Sorbet dwarf/Blueberry Glaze dwarf are all compact.
    - Jewel – mid-season, large tangy fruit.
  - Pollination is assisted by bees, especially bumble bees using sonication.
    - Although Blueberries are self-fertile, they will produce slightly more heavily if cross-pollinated, so planting two different varieties can be beneficial.
- **Brambles**
  - Summer Red Raspberries (hollow when picked)
    - Canby: Early, nearly thornless, bright red
    - Willamette: Early, dark red
    - Meeker: Midseason
    - Latham: Late, old standard Eastern variety
  - Fall bearing Raspberries
    - Caroline: Midseason, canes vary in height, shorter canes bearing before longer canes. Excellent in California, if you can find it.
  - Black Raspberries (hollow when picked)
  - Dwarf Variety: Strawberry Shortcake
    - Prune out only truly dead canes.
  - Hybrids: Olallieberries/Marionberries/Boysenberries (often called Blackberries)
- **Blackberries**
  - Plug at stem end when picked
  - Trailing:
    - Boysen: mid to late season, thorny, maroon colored, outstanding unique flavor.
    - Logan: raspberry red color, thorny or thornless
    - Marion – mid-season, thorny, aromatic, good flavor
    - Olallie: early medium to large black, somewhat soft, good in California.
  - Dwarf Variety: Blackberry Shortcake
    - Prune out only truly dead canes.
- **Pruning and Trellising**
  - Perennial Roots/biennial shoots (canes).
    - First year cane=primocane
    - 2nd year = Floracane.
  - Remove canes that have produced fruit
  - Keep rows to 2' wide by snipping or mowing shoots outside the row
  - Trellis all but the dwarf varieties
    - Dwarf varieties are best in containers
  - Tip prune after 3-4 feet to promote branching
- **Upright Blackberries**
  - 4-12 foot canes need support.
  - Respond to summer tip pruning.
  - Produce root suckers like raspberries.

- Newer primocane cultivars will fruit the first year then again the second year.
- **Semi-Upright Blackberries**
  - Grow to 15 feet and arch to the ground when not supported.
  - Crown forming no root suckers.
  - Thornless.
- **Trailing Blackberries**
  - Grow to 10-20 feet and the ground and must be supported.
  - Crown forming
  - No root suckers.
- **Black Raspberries**
  - Canes from root crown, not root suckers
  - Have a clumping habit.
- **Red and Yellow Raspberries**
  - Canes from the roots
  - Suckering
- **Other Berries you might run across:**
  - *Lingonberries* (*Vaccinium vitis-idaea*) from North – polar regions.
    - Acid lovers (like Blueberries), we are not cold enough for them here and they won't make much fruit.
  - *Goji berries*. From China. *Lycium* ssp.
    - In Europe known as Wolf Berry.
    - Many nutrition and health claims, mainly untested.
  - *Acai* “berry” from the Acai palm
    - Grows in swampy regions of South America/Brazil.
    - Only hardy to 50 degrees, will not survive our winters outside.
  - *Gooseberries* – *Ribes* ssp.
    - Green berries.
  - *Garden Huckleberry*: *Solanum scabrum* (African leaf crop)
  - *Huckleberry* (a.k.a. Bilberry, Whortleberry, Hurtleberry. Various species of the genres *Vaccinium* and *Gaylussacia* in the Eastern U.S.
  - *California Native Huckleberry*: *Vaccinium ovatum*.
    - Grows in shade, acid soil with adequate moisture.
    - Nice garden shrub
    - Deer resistant
    - Fruit that looks like a blueberry but is somewhat insipid in flavor.
  - *Currants*: *Ribes* ssp.
    - Black, Red, Green or White berries.
  - *Dried Currants* at the grocery store, known as Zante currants, are dried black Corinth grapes
    - I.e., Raisins.
  - *Himalayan blackberry*: *Rubus armeniacus*
    - naturalized invasively in California.
  - *Native California Blackberry*: *Rubus ursinus*
    - Not seen in disturbed areas.

- “Black Satin” Blackberry is a cultivated variety, and it is thornless.
- *Honeyberry*: *Lonicera caerulea*
  - A member of the honeysuckle group.
  - Requires two varieties for pollination
  - Looks like a larger, oval blueberry.
  - Native to North America
  - Tolerates wet conditions.

**Resources:**

- [www.davewilson.com/nurseries/products/vine-bush-fruits/blueberry/](http://www.davewilson.com/nurseries/products/vine-bush-fruits/blueberry/)
  - <http://sfp.ucdavis.edu/crops/blueberries/blueberryupdate>
- <https://www.sloatgardens.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Brambleberries.pdf>
- <https://www.sloatgardens.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Growing-Strawberries.pdf>
  - <https://www.sloatgardens.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Blueberry.pdf>

●