

Fruit in brief

Mid-season raspberries should be coming into their own in August to follow on from the early season varieties. Maintain watering, tie in wayward canes and if necessary, trim back long canes to the limit of their supports.

Once strawberries have finished fruiting, the old leaves and runners can be removed to allow a new crop of clean foliage to emerge. Straw mulches should be raked up and composted and pull up any weeds as both will harbour pests and diseases during the winter. Water well if the soil is dry.

Raspberries

Every garden has room for at least one raspberry plant since every garden has a fence or divide of some kind which could make a perfect support for this delicious cane fruit. There are lots of varieties to choose from, some better suited to small plots than others and most crop between early-July and October

All require a well-drained, but moisture-retentive soil and some sunshine although they will tolerate shade. The support of a wall, fence or more traditionally posts and strong wires is essential for summer-fruiting varieties.

Prepare the soil well prior to planting by digging in plenty of well-rotted garden compost or manure as this will help to hold water during the summer months. A scattering of general fertiliser a week or two prior to planting will help the young canes to develop.

The best time for planting is in the autumn, but it can be carried out any time during the dormant season from October to March. Plant your canes about 45cm (18in) apart and allow 1.8m (6ft) between the rows. Firm in gently.

Cut back all the stems to within 30cm (12in) or so of the ground and water well before applying thick mulch over the roots and this should be topped up each spring. As the new canes emerge in the spring, tie them onto the wires or other support, evenly spaced. As the plants establish more canes, and therefore more fruit, will be produced in the following seasons and plants should crop for up to 15 years.

Pruning is simple; simply cut down all the fruited stems of summer varieties after picking leaving the new canes intact. All the stems of autumn fruited are cut down in February.

Varieties

To avoid disease problems and prolong the effective cropping life of your canes, always buy virus-free stock from a fruit specialist:

Summer fruiting

- **Malling Jewel**: An early-fruiting raspberry with great flavour.
- **Glen Ample**: Another spine-free variety with tasty crops of bright red fruits and good resistance to diseases.
- **Malling Admiral**: A late-season variety (mid-July to mid-August) with good disease resistance and spine-free stems.

Autumn fruiting

- **Autumn Bliss**: Probably the best-known autumn fruiting variety and still popular for its heavy crops.
- **Allgold**: A yellow-fruited sort of the above, the berries have a sweet taste that some prefer to the red-fruited types.