

Training and Pruning Raspberries and Blackberries

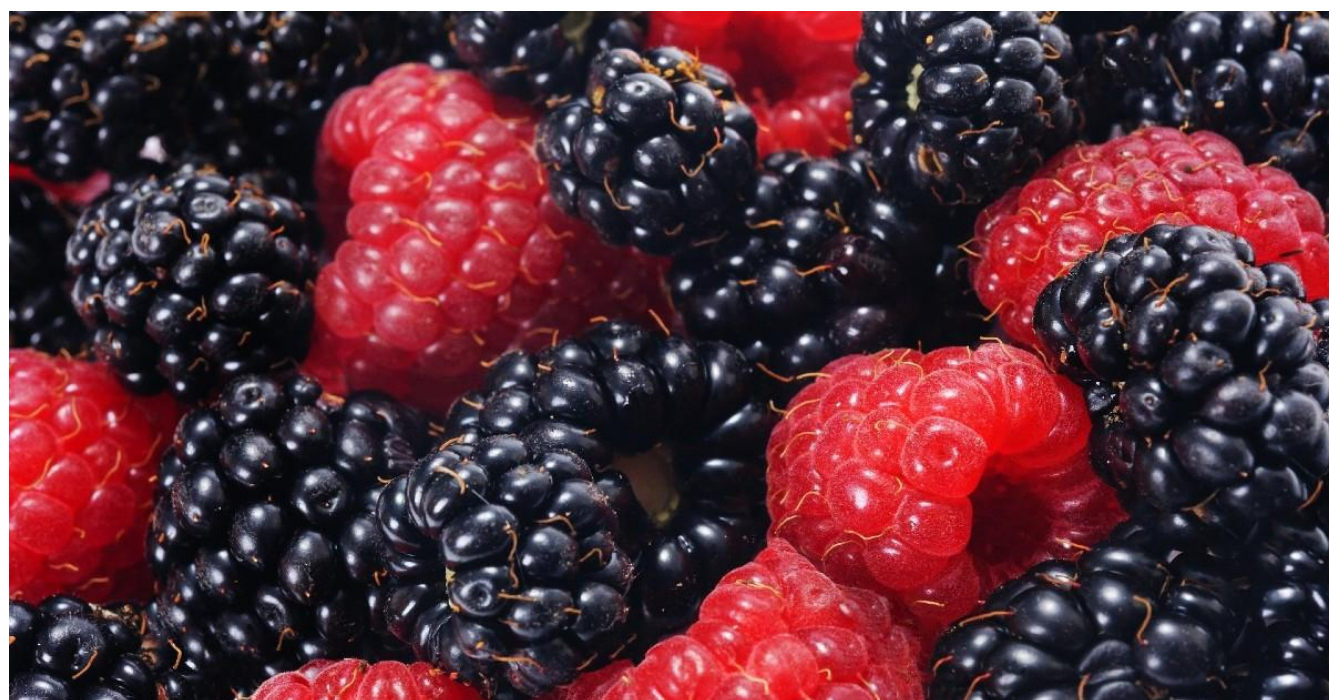
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- **Small Fruit**

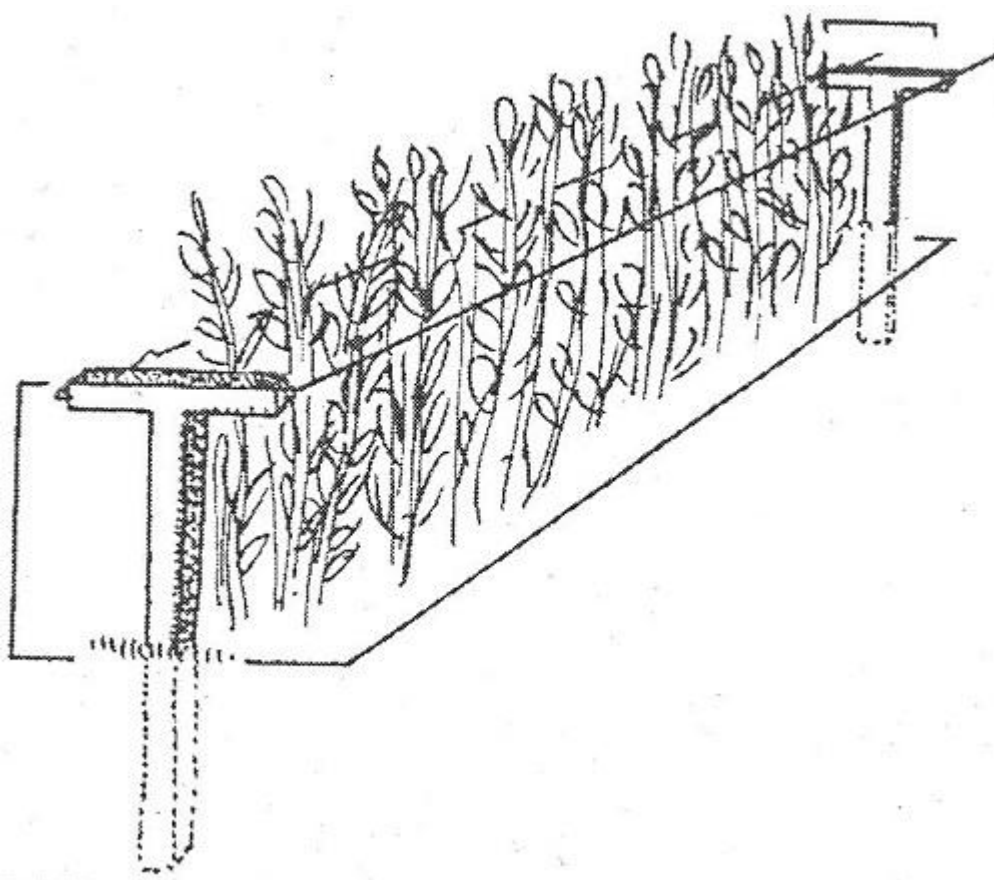
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- **Home and Garden Information Center**



Updated: June 1, 2021

March is a good time to prune fruit plants in Maryland because you can fully assess winter damage. Raspberries, however, can be pruned any time canes are fully dormant. There are several ways to train and manage brambles depending upon their growth habits: erect vs. trailing blackberries, and suckering vs. clump growers. Refer to the graphic below for a simple trellis for bramble plants. Fruiting canes of all brambles (except primocane-bearing types) die soon after fruiting is completed. Remove these dead canes when they become dormant or in late winter.



Simple trellis for bramble plants

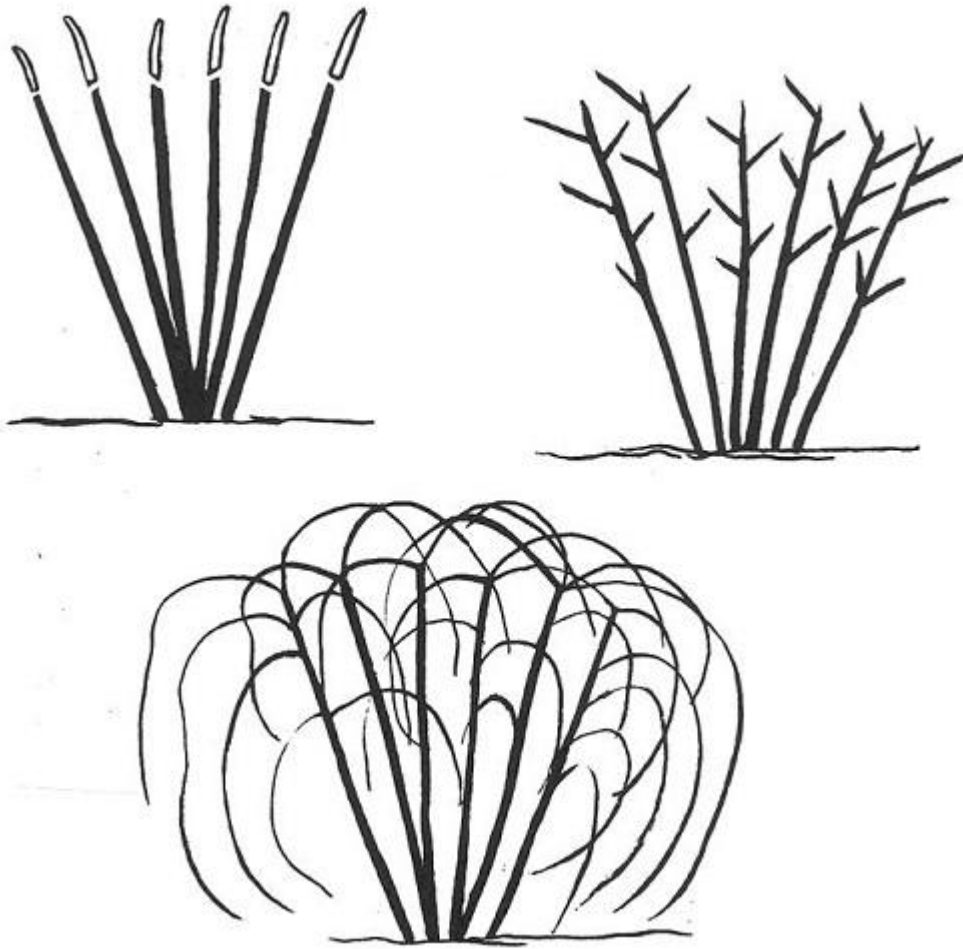
Use Twine and place supports 25 ft. apart



Dormant season pruning of red raspberries

Spacing of canes after pruning 12- 18 inches

All bramble plants also require heading-back cuts during the growing season, as well as the removal of weak, damaged, and diseased canes. The graphics and table below summarize the training and pruning systems used for brambles.

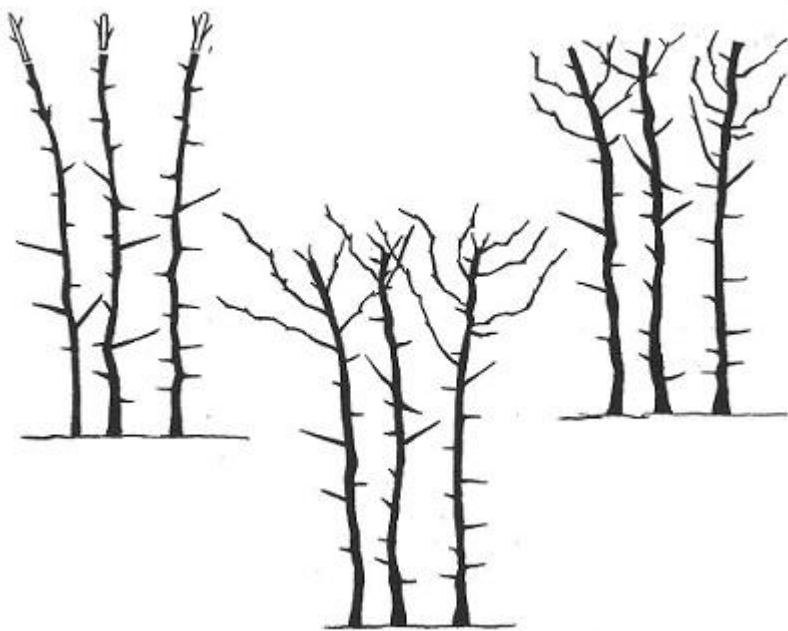


Purple and black raspberries: summer pruning

Top left: top the new canes at 36 in.

Top rt.: laterals (side shoots) develop after topping.

Bottom: cut back laterals to 6 - 8 inches



Thorny erect blackberries: summer pruning

Top left: top young canes at 34 - 36 inches.

Top rt.: laterals (side shoots) will develop after topping.

Bottom: cut back laterals to 18 inches when dormant.

Recommended Cultural Systems and Pruning Practices for Established Brambles

*** Hill system refers to spacing plants and not allowing them to form a hedge. It does not imply that the soil around the plants should be mounded-up.**

Species	Cultural systems (hedge or hill*)	At Planting	Summer pruning of primocanes	Dormant pruning; winter to early spring
Red raspberry summer-bearing	Hedge; plants tied to a trellis	Head back to ground-level	Narrow the hedge to 18 in. in width if necessary.	Select canes of no less than a pencil thickness. Cut back to $\frac{3}{4}$ of their length. Remove weak canes. Remove already fruited dead canes. Space canes about 4 in. apart and keep the width of the hedge to 12 - 18 in.
Red raspberry, primocanebearing (fall-fruiting)	Hedge	Head back to ground-level	Narrow the hedge to 18 in. if necessary; harvest fruit during Aug. and Sept.	Cut all canes off near ground level in late February or early March.
Black raspberry	Hill*	Head back to 2 - 3 in. above soil	Top canes at 36 - 40 in. to force lateral branches. (Remove at least 4 in. of growth).	Head back laterals to 12 in. or no less than a pencil thickness. Remove weak canes, leaving about 5 per hill. Remove dead (fruited) canes, if this was not done since the previous summer.

Species	Cultural systems (hedge or hill*)	At Planting	Summer pruning of primocanes	Dormant pruning; winter to early spring
Purple raspberry	Hedge/hill*	Head back to 2 - 3 in. above soil	Top canes at 40 in. to force lateral branches (remove at least 4 in. of growth).	Head back laterals to 18 in. or no less than a pencil thickness. Remove weak canes, leaving about 5 per hill. Remove dead (fruited) canes, if this was not done since the previous summer.
Thorny blackberry	Hill*; plants must be tied to a trellis	Head back to 2 - 3 in. above soil	Head back at top wire of trellis.	Tie 4 or 5 vigorous canes per hill to the trellis. Top canes, if not tipped during previous summer, at 6 to 7 feet and cut back laterals at 18 in. Remove laterals that rise too low on the cane making picking difficult. Remove dead (fruited) canes, if this was not done since the previous summer.

Related information

Growing, Selecting, and Planting Raspberries and Blackberries

Watering, Fertilizing, Harvesting Raspberries and Blackberries

Additional resources

Blackberry Pruning Demonstration, University of Kentucky <

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AAeWaktjwaU>> - youtube video

How Do I Prune Raspberries? University of Maine <

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pOzo4s9Z9jE>> - youtube video

Pruning Raspberries, University of Nebraska < <https://www.youtube.com>

[/watch?v=UArPPRmGJsg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UArPPRmGJsg)> - youtube video