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# Growing Raspberries

By S. A. McCrory\*

Raspberry growing is largely limited to the northern part of the United States. Raspberries can be found growing wild in parts of South Dakota, indicating the possibilities for growing them. Yet growers have trouble getting plants to live through the winter and escape the heat and drought of summer.

The raspberry does not form terminal buds in the fall but grows until cold weather arrives. If good growing conditions continue until late in the summer or early fall, the plant keeps on growing and may suffer winter injury. Injury will be most severe in the tips of the stems. It will be worse when the winter is more severe, so the plant must be prepared for winter.

The fruit is sometimes hurt by hot drying winds. Successful growers will choose a protected site or have a summer wind protection.

## Plant on a Protected Site for Best Results with Raspberries

Favorable location of the raspberry planting is necessary for good yields. The planting should be protected from north, south and west winds. Low ground with a high water table should be avoided, since plants seldom do well on poorly drained soil. There is danger that with too much moisture near the end of the growing season plants may not properly mature before cold weather arrives.

The best site is a gently rolling slope facing north or east. Soil erosion can be reduced and water conserved if the planting is made on the contour.

*\*Associate Professor of Horticulture*

*This leaflet was prepared by Mr. McCrory at the request of the South Dakota State College Agricultural Extension Service.*

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S. D. State College, Brookings  
U.S. Department



## **Soil With Much Organic Matter Is Best for Raising Raspberries**

The raspberry may be grown on several soil types. A sandy loam is best. It can be worked easily and absorbs and holds moisture. Plowing under green manure crops such as sweet clover or adding stable manure helps soil hold moisture.

## **Plow in the Fall for Good Planting Conditions the Following Spring**

Fall plowing is better than spring plowing. Plowing six to eight inches deep followed by disking in the spring will give good planting conditions. If sod or other organic material is plowed under it should be given time to decay.

## **Buy Hardy Disease-free Raspberry Plants from a Dependable Nursery**

Plants grown for producing fruit or plants grown where diseases are not controlled should not be used. Disease-free plants may be bought from a reliable nursery where inspections are made and certified stock is sold. Vigorous stock should be used for best results. Raspberries are sometimes sold by grades and only the best should be ordered. A good plant will have many small roots attached to a five or six-inch piece of the main root.

## **Plant Raspberries Either in Hills Or in a Hedge Row Arrangement**

We are limited to varieties in this area that lend themselves to hill or hedge row plantings.

If hills are used the plants should be set in check rows with spacings 6 by 6 feet or 4 by 6 feet. This will depend on the cultivating equipment. With this type of planting the plants do not spread a great distance from the hill and working about the plants is easier.

A second system is to train the plants to grow in a solid row giving a hedge appearance. The rows are generally spaced six feet apart and two feet of spacing given to the plants. The plants will spread to a distance of 12 to 14 inches in the row. This system produces more plants per acre but care is more difficult.

## **Cultivating Keeps the Raspberry Planting from Becoming a "Patch"**

Cultivation serves many purposes—it controls weeds, helps in insect and disease control, keeps the soil in good condition and helps prevent spread of plants between rows. A small spring-tooth harrow is a good tool for this operation. Any one-horse cultivator that pulverizes the soil to a depth of three or four inches can be used. Start cultivation early in the spring and continue until the fruit is well set. Late cultivation may bring late plant growth. This tender growth will then be in danger of winter killing.

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## **Two Types of Pruning Needed for Best Results; Three May be Used**

There are two times when pruning is needed. The raspberry is a perennial plant with a biennial top. Fruit is produced on the stems that are a year old. After they have fruited they die and should be removed at the ground level any time after the fruit is harvested. This may be done with hand clippers or with a bramble hook.

The second pruning is thinning out or removing extra plants. Where the hill system is used there should be four to six plants in a hill. If the hedge row system is used, the plants should be thinned to about an eight-inch spacing. The weaker growing plants should be removed.

In some cases a third type of pruning may be advisable and that is to remove the tips from the fruiting stems before growth begins in the second year. This is largely a pinching out method.

## **Winter Protection is Needed to Get Best Raspberry Yields**

If a good location is chosen there will be a windbreak of trees or buildings to the north, south and west. This will reduce drying in both summer and winter. If plants are fully matured and only recommended varieties are planted, they will tolerate temperatures as low as we normally get in South Dakota.

To have properly matured plants, their growth should be reduced in late summer by stopping cultivation and irrigation. In some cases it is desirable to plant competing crops, such as oats. This is done about August 1.

For plants not protected by windbreaks, or where early maturing is not reached, it may be necessary to bend them over and cover them in late fall with soil. This is a hard job and may cause injury unless great care is used while covering and uncovering the plants.

Many plants are lost when they are uncovered and exposed to bright sun and drying winds such as we sometimes get in early spring.

## **South Dakota Raspberries Have Not Been Badly Hurt by Disease**

Few raspberries are planted in South Dakota and this reduces the disease problem. If disease-free plants are planted growers will have little trouble in controlling diseases. A serious fungus disease attacking most of the red raspberries is known as "Gray Bark" or Anthracnose. This disease may be noticed in the spring on the new growth of stems where it forms small, purplish, slightly raised spots. They gradually take on a lighter color and form split places in the bark. With favorable conditions the disease may become serious.

If the disease appears, all of the infected parts should be removed and the plants sprayed with a 4-4-50 Bordeaux (copper sulphate, 4 parts; lime, 4; water, 50). The spraying may have to



be repeated two or three times during the growing season. If the disease appears often, a resistant variety such as *Ohta* should be planted.

There are many virus diseases, but it is hard for the average grower to find them. If the plants show a stunted growth, curled, mottled leaves or short spreading growth, disease may be present. Such plants will not produce and should be destroyed. Virus diseases are often spread by insects and they should be controlled. If only one or a few plants appear diseased they should be destroyed. A careful check should be made three or four times during the growing season. The *Latham* is resistant to many virus diseases and is winter hardy.

## **Insects Have Not Caused Great Damage; May Spread Disease**

Plant lice or aphids may hurt raspberry leaves. They make them curl and slow down proper growth. An application of Black Leaf 40 with a little soap added will usually keep this insect in check.

There are insects such as tree crickets and cane borers which cause small injuries in old neglected plantings. These insects do not often cause damage in a well cared for or new planting.

## **Only Red Varieties Recommended For South Dakota Plantings**

*Latham* is a mid-season variety developed at the Minnesota Fruit Breeding farm. It is hardy, vigorous and gives quite a bit of fruit. Where the right cultural practices are used, it will live without a winter covering.

*Chief* will give fruit a week or 10 days earlier than *Latham* and is a vigorous grower. It is a seedling of *Latham* and has about the same plant characteristics. Both of these varieties will grow without supporting structures.

*Ohta* (or *Flaming Giant*) is probably the most hardy red raspberry. It was developed at the South Dakota experiment station in 1912. It is disease-resistant, especially to Anthracnose. The fruit is light red of medium size and fair quality. It may not yield as well as *Latham* but is a good plant to grow where extreme hardiness is needed.

### **Extension Service, South Dakota State College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts, Brookings, South Dakota**

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