

NEWS RELEASE
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PROPER PRUNING IS ESSENTIAL TO GOOD RASPBERRY PRODUCTION

BACKYARD HORTICULTURE

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Raspberries can be difficult to grow well in Mariposa County, especially during periods of hot and dry weather. However, gardeners who grow a few plants are usually rewarded with some fine fruit every year. Besides a good watering program, raspberries need to be properly pruned in order to bear good crops.

Raspberries are bush-type plants that bear their fruit on biennial (live for two years) branched, upright canes. The plants may be grown as freestanding shrubs, or tied to stakes or wire trellises. This is different from boysenberries and other blackberries, which are “trailing” or vine like plants that bear fruit on one-year-old canes.

There are two types of red raspberries: June-bearing and fall-bearing (everbearing) types. The June-bearing type produces one crop on short shoots that grow on one-year-old canes. The fall-bearing type usually bears two crops on the same cane, producing the first crop in the fall of the first year on the ends of the new canes. After this fall production, the ends of the canes die back. The lower portion of the canes overwinter and bear a second crop the following spring. Because of the different bearing habits, you need to prune June and fall-bearing raspberries differently.

Immediately after harvesting June-bearing type raspberries, cut out the old canes (those that produced this year's crop) as close to the ground as possible. Thin out the new canes, leaving only 8 to 12 closely spaced, vigorous canes that come up near the

crown. These new canes will produce next year's crop. If you use supports, tie the new canes to the stake or trellis wire at this time. In early spring, before growth starts on the fruiting canes, prune them back to a height of from four to five feet (this results in fewer, but larger berries of better quality).

Fall-bearing types are pruned differently because they bear the first crop toward the end of the first growing season. After you harvest your fall crop, cut off the upper portion of the canes that have borne fruit. The lower portions of the canes will bear fruit the next spring. After harvesting the spring crop, cut out old canes and select new canes as you would for the June-bearing types.

In order to keep your raspberry plants growing and producing well, be sure to give them periodic deep irrigations throughout the summer months. Drought-stressed plants will have leaves that appear scorched, and will produce fewer, poor quality berries.

For a free leaflet on pruning raspberries and blackberries, call the UC Cooperative Extension office in Mariposa, 966-2417.

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