

"A BIT ABOUT BERRIES"

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Your favorite berries – strawberries, raspberries, blackberries (the ones that behave themselves) and blueberries – are also the most common berries grown in the Northwest. Here are a few reasons to grow berries:

- Little compares with the taste of a sweet, ripe berry still warm from the sun.
- Berries are a healthy, delicious addition to one's diet.
- They are so easy to grow! Berries, with a few exceptions, can grow in virtually any soil.
- They are easy to preserve for use later on.

Confirm which soil your chosen fruit prefers. Fruits are happier when planted in full sun but will grow and produce in light shade. Avoid planting too closely to trees and other large plants as they can cast deep shade and will compete for water and nutrients.

Select cultivars that will do well in your climate. A cultivar is a specially cultivated variety of a plant. It's a good idea to plant several different cultivars of a fruit. Planting several types allows for fruit throughout the summer. For example, raspberries have summer, mid season, late season and autumn fruiting cultivars. A combination of cultivars produces crops of berries for months! Another benefit to multiple cultivars is if one crop fails another is ripening.

Raspberries and blackberries do better in beds while blueberries and strawberries will grow as well in appropriately sized pots. If using pots, remember the plants will need a new layer of compost each year to replenish nutrients the berries will need to thrive.

Concerned about having more berries in a season than you can eat? There are easy ways to preserve the bounty. The simplest, most versatile way to preserve berries is to place them in a single layer on a baking sheet. No washing is necessary at this time as washing damages fragile fruits. Place the tray in the freezer and, in a few hours, there are whole frozen berries to use later for smoothies, jams, jellies, sauces and desserts. Berries are so easy to grow and preserve, gardeners can easily enjoy the "fruits" of their labor all year long! Resources: *Growing Berries and Currants*, by Richard Bird and Kate Whiteman and *Sustainable Gardening the Oregon and Washington Master Gardener Handbook*.