

Blackberries

Varieties

There are many blackberry varieties available, some of which are thorny while others are thornless.

They vary widely in such features as harvest season, berry size, flavour, productivity, hardiness and susceptibility to diseases.

LOCH NESS

Currently the standard semi-erect thornless blackberry for fresh sales in the Fraser Valley and Vancouver Island. It is probably not reliably hardy for Interior locations. The fruit is large, relatively firm with good flavour and shelf life. It has a long harvest season (late July to early September). The plants are moderately winter hardy and vigorous, but susceptible to crown gall.

TRIPLE CROWN (TRIAL)

A relatively new, semi-erect thornless blackberry for fresh market production. Ripens later than Loch Ness. Excellent yield potential. Flavour is superior to Loch Ness. Fruit is large and excellent quality, but is slightly softer than Loch Ness and may not be suitable for shipping.

BLACKBERRY HYBRIDS

There are a number of trailing berries that were derived from crosses between blackberries and red raspberries. These include boysenberry, dewberry, loganberry, sunberry, tayberry, and tummelberry. They also vary widely in hardiness, disease resistance, plant vigour, berry size and thorniness. Thornless strains of loganberry and boysenberry are available, but, with most varieties, if the plants or roots are injured, they will revert to a thorny type.

Spacing

There is considerable variation in spacing. Table 13 lists the commonly used distance and number of plants required.

Table 13. Blackberry plant spacing and number of plants required

Distance between Plants <i>Meters</i>	Distance between Rows <i>Meters</i>	Number of Plants Required	
		<i>Hectare</i>	<i>Acre</i>
1.8 (6 ft)	3.6 (12 ft)	1,540	605
2.4 (8 ft)	2.4 (8 ft)	1,680	680
2.4 (8 ft)	2.7 (9 ft)	1,483	600
2.7 (9 ft)	2.7 (9 ft)	1,329	538
2.7 (9 ft)	3.0 (10 ft)	1,196	484

Pruning/Training

Remove floricanes at the crown once they have fruited. Training of new shoots to the wires is best done in the late winter or early spring to minimize winter injury. Head back new canes to the desired length when they are tied to the wires. A plant should produce 10 to 14 healthy canes each year. If laterals are sent out, remove them entirely or cut them back to five or six buds.

Cover Crops

Refer to information on cover crops in the front of this guide and the raspberry section.

Nutrition

SOIL AND LEAF ANALYSIS

As a general recommendation, blackberry growers should follow the same soil and plant tissue testing information provided for raspberries. No calibrated soil or tissue testing system is available for blackberries.

FERTILIZERS

New Plantings. In most instances no fertilizer is required at planting. Once growth begins, band a complete fertilizer 30 cm (1 ft) from the transplant. Recommended rates of nutrients are given below for new and established plantings.

Established Plantings. In the second and subsequent years of growth blackberries have a low requirement for most nutrients. Usually nitrogen is the only nutrient required. Apply the nitrogen in a 1 m (3 ft) band around the plants or band half the rate down either side of the row about 40 cm (16 in) from the plant. Apply nitrogen when growth begins.

Table 14. Macro-nutrient application rates for blackberries

Nutrient	Rate of Application	
	New Plantings	Established Plantings
Nitrogen (N)	15 - 50 kg/ha (6 - 20 kg/acre)	55 - 95 kg/ha (22 - 38 kg/acre)
Phosphorus (P ₂ O ₅)	15 - 90 kg/ha (6 - 36 kg/acre)	0 - 45 kg/ha (0 - 18 kg/acre)
Potassium (K ₂ O)	15 -115 kg/ha (6 - 47 kg/acre)	0 - 55 kg/ha (0 - 22 kg/acre)

Application rates are dependent on spacing of plants. The highest application rates are set for plant spacings that give about 1600 plants per hectare.

MANURE USE

Poultry manure is an effective source of nitrogen for blackberries but must be stored and spread in an environmentally responsible manner. A manure spreader designed for side delivery or band application can be used to apply poultry manure. Spread manure only once each season—broadcast and incorporated into the soil in the early spring (after February 15 and before April 15). Base application rates on a late summer soil test. Most

poultry manure contains up to 12 kg/yd³ of total nitrogen. Some ammonia nitrogen is lost during application and losses are greater when manure is left on the soil surface for more than 12 hours. Poultry manure is generally very high in calcium and contains high levels of ammonia nitrogen that is readily available to plants.

Preplant application. Apply manure at a rate that does not exceed 50 kg/ha (20 kg/acre) of available nitrogen. Newly planted blackberries require low amounts of nitrogen and this rate is almost the maximum required. Applying and immediately incorporating about 5 yd³/ha (2 yd³/acre) poultry manure provides most of the nitrogen required by newly planted blackberries.

Established plantings. Apply manure at a rate that does not exceed 90 kg/ha (36 kg/acre) of available nitrogen. Established blackberries require low amounts of nitrogen and this rate is almost the maximum required. Applying and immediately incorporating about 9 yd³/ha (3.5 yd³/acre) poultry manure provides most of the nitrogen required by established blackberries.