**SHRUB FACTS**

With several different species native to northern temperate regions across the globe (including PA), the blackberry is a trailing, perennial bramble with dark, sweet-tart fruit ripening July-August. Blackberries belong to the rose (ROSACEAE) botanical family, which includes other common fruits like raspberries, peaches, apples, cherries and almonds, with the signature 5-petalled white or pale pink flower. Blackberries produce biennial stems called canes every two years. In its first year of growth, the primocane can grow up to 6-12 feet long, trailing along the ground unless staked upright. In the second year, the primocane becomes a floricane and produces horizontal or lateral branches, thorns, flowers, and eventually fruit. After fruiting, the cane dies back and can be pruned away. The flowers are pollinated by honeybees and other varieties of native bees. Before the fruit is ripe, blackberry fruits are red and firm. The fruit is ready to be picked when the fruit is deep black and pulls cleanly away without a yank. Unlike raspberries, blackberries keep their cap!

**SEASONAL CARE**

Blackberries are easy to establish, propagate, and care for with seasonal pruning and trellising. They favor filtered to full sunlight and well-draining, slightly acidic soil (pH 5-7). Blackberries come in a number of varieties: trailing or erect, thorny or thornless. How you care for your plants depends on its growing style!

**WINTER/SPRING:** Remove all second-year canes (will usually be withered, grey) and thin out to 8-10 strongest new canes. Shorten canes to 7 feet and laterals to 15 inches.

**SUMMER:** Prune back tips of new canes when they reach 3 feet in height. This ensures that the developing fruit has enough light and air circulation. Harvest fully-ripe blackberries in the morning when the dew has dried. Store berries in the refrigerator.

**FALL:** Add leaf mulch or optional compost tea to the base of plants to build soil fertility.

**NUTRITIONAL BENEFITS**

Antioxidant-rich blackberries are extremely healthy and delicious! They can be eaten raw, and cooked in any number of ways! A one cup-serving of blackberries contains 25% daily recommend value of fiber (digestive health) and vitamin C (heals wounds, boosts immune system) and 19% vitamin K (supportive of healthy bones and connective tissue). The seeds also contain omega-3 and omega-6 acids, helpful for brain health and nerve signaling. The leaf and root of blackberry contain tannins, gallic acid, villosin, and iron, which have been prized in herbal folk medicine for their help with relieving toothache, diarrhea, and fluid retention related to diabetes and gout. A tea from the leaves can be used to make a gargle for sore throats, and as a wash for scaly skin conditions like psoriasis.

**ROOTING BLACKBERRY**

Blackberries are incredibly easy to propagate through suckers, stem or root cuttings. Oftentimes, blackberries re-rooting themselves where the tip of the cane meets the ground. You can dig up where the plant has rooted, create a quick cut along the stem and repot. In the fall, you can dig up 3-6 inch sections of root, bundle them together, store cold in a dry area or refrigerator for 3 weeks then place in a moist mix of peat and sand. Once new shoots appear, plant in the garden.