



BLACKBERRY (RUBUS FRUCTICOSUS, RUBUS SPP.)

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.

