



Sierra View Nursery Inc.

Blackberry Care

Blackberries will thrive in most soil types, but good drainage is desirable with most varieties. Soils that are naturally fertile, easily worked, and of good moisture holding capacity are the most suitable.

Planting

One-year-old tips should be planted in March or April. Plants that are 2 years and older may be planted earlier. Dig a hole twice as wide and just as deep as the root ball, covering any white sprouts arising from the crown. Avoid cramming the roots in the planting hole, pruning them back if necessary. Avoid pruning of roots on thornless varieties as they may give rise to thorny suckers.

Watering

During the growing season blackberries require frequent irrigations so that they are always moist. Blackberry plants require approximately 1 to 2 inches of water per week from mid-May through October. It is best to always keep the plants moist without saturating the soil and rotting the roots. In general, irrigate twice a week, wetting the entire root system with each irrigation. However, during the fruiting stage or during hot and windy conditions, greater amounts and more frequent applications of water should be applied. Overhead irrigation promotes fruit rot and leaf diseases, so is not recommended for blackberries. When using drip irrigation, blackberries should be watered every day for 1 to 2 hours, longer in hot weather or when fruit is ripening. Mulching with a 2-3" layer of *Walk-On Supreme Mulch* will help retain moisture and prevent weeds.

Pruning and Training

As the new canes begin growing along the ground in the spring, they may be moved in alongside the row from time to time to keep them out of harm's way until they are ready to be trained. These canes will not bear fruit until the following summer when they are two years old. After harvest, the two-year-old fruiting canes are removed as close to the ground as possible without injuring the new canes.

In cold climates, spring training is a must as canes left on the ground over winter are less apt to be damaged by cold. The ideal time to spring train is after the danger of freezing weather and before the leaf buds begin expanding.

Several systems are used in training trailing blackberries. The simplest for the home gardener is stakes with a cross arm about 5 ft high. Canes should be brought up either directly from the ground or spiraled around the stake and held in place with two or three ties of strong twine. Twine may not be necessary if canes are looped over the cross arm and the ends are twined into the canes below.

Various innovative methods of training are used with wire trellises. The most common trellis has two wires, one 5 ft high and the other 3 ft high. The canes to be trained are divided into two parts, and each taken separately to the top wire. Then the canes are brought down to the lower wire and turned back toward the plant with one or two twists. Excess cane length can be removed.

Fertilizing

Blackberries require at least yearly applications of a nitrogen-containing fertilizer for good growth and fruit production. Apply 5 to 6 pounds of 20-20-20 or ammonium sulfate (21-0-0) fertilizer per 100 feet of row. If plants lack vigor, apply an additional 1 pound of ammonium nitrate (34-0-0) per 100 feet of row or 1.5 pounds of ammonium sulfate at bloom or midsummer, just prior to an irrigation. If you use manure or compost, apply it in the late fall or early winter to allow leaching of excess salts by rain.

Fertilize young trees monthly with *Agrothrive fruit and flower* fertilizer for the first 3 years. Established trees do not require regular fertilizing. The one exception being trees planted in containers, which should be fertilized 3 times per year with *Down-To-Earth Fruit Tree* fertilizer.