

When I first moved here 18 years ago, someone told me in order to call myself an Oregonian I had to live more years in Oregon than I had in any another state. (Insert eye-roll.) My hope is that by sharing my vast knowledge of Oregon's berries—one of the top things I love about the Beaver State—with you here, I'll be able to finally call myself an Oregonian.

Summer time means berry time to me, and the beauty of our berries aptly meets, or surpasses, their flavor. The decadence of picking buckets of berries among the warm, heady vines is among my cherished seasonal activities. But which kinds are best? And what are the differences? What if you want to grow your own? Do not despair, berry lovers. This column is for you.

First off, what's the difference between blackberries and raspberries? Other than the obvious color difference, raspberries have a hole in the center of the fruit (it's hollow), whereas blackberries are solid throughout. Raspberries have that ability to simply fall apart when picked if they're too ripe and can literally melt in your mouth. To me, raspberries have a bright taste, matching their bright red color. They're delicate and gorgeous, and the tang they deliver to the middle of your tongue is sweet. They might be my favorite, were I to have one.

For many people, marionberry, or the Marion blackberry, is a local favorite. It was developed specifically for growing in the Willamette Valley by researchers at OSU and carries a complex flavor that is both tart and earthy. Marionberries are fantastic in pies and

baked goods, but if you're like me, fresh berries all by themselves are pretty fantastic.

One of my favorite berries to eat fresh is the loganberry. A strange, accidental crossing of a raspberry and a blackberry, the loganberry was developed in California in the 1880s. Their flavor is soft, very much derived from that of their raspberry parentage. They seem to dissolve in your mouth, making them a fleeting summer memory and almost magical.

The loganberry is a parent to my jam-making berry of choice, the tayberry. Many people haven't heard of the tayberry, but for Willamette Valley jam-makers like me, they're a favorite, a cross between a loganberry and black raspberry. Originally developed in Scotland, the fruit can be hard to pick, making it impossible for machine harvest or commercial purposes. The flavor is strong and tart, but best of all, the tayberry possesses floral qualities, perfect for sauces and jams. Paired with a bit of lavender, this is my favorite jam to make.

The Sylvan blackberry is juicy and if you're seeking a true taste of summer, I'd point you this direction. Some say the sylvanberry makes even better pies than marionberries, but perhaps you

Berrytastic

the sassy gardener

BY LEANN LOCHER



should make one of each and have a taste off. I like to say that if you look up blackberry in a dictionary, the quintessential look for the Sylvan blackberry would be pictured there.

All of the berries described above are available at u-pick farms in the areas surrounding Portland. During berry season I am aware and grateful for our urban growth boundary, allowing for agriculture to be accessible and not hours away from the city population. To find local farms for u-pick or produce purchase in the Washington, Clackamas and Multnomah county area, visit tricityfarm.org.

Grown your own!

With a little planning and thoughtful location setting, growing your own caneberries

(raspberries and blackberries) can yield good crops for up to 20 years. When siting berries, drainage is one of the most important factors for success, making sure they don't sit in boggy or overly wet conditions during our months of rain. Caneberries need to be trained onto a trellis, and your structure should be installed at the time of planting. Planting should occur as early as possible in the spring, and be prepared to wait a year for berry production. However, patience is a virtue—raspberries, freshly picked on a summer morning for breakfast atop your cereal, are a pretty great way to start the day. Once established, plants just need a little fertilizer, some manure in fall or winter, and 1-1.5 inches of water per week during our dry season. Depending on the kind of caneberries you grow, pruning will vary if you're working with primocanes (first year of growth) or floricanes (second year of growth).

Feel like celebrating berries?

Attend the Oregon Berry Festival, Friday, July 22 (noon-6 p.m.) and Saturday, July 23 (11 a.m.-6 p.m.) at the Ecotrust Building (721 NW Ninth Ave.) in Portland. Sample berry ice creams and pies and check out the first Oregon Berry Chef Cook-Off. For more information, visit oregonberryfestival.com.

LEANN LOCHER is an OSU Extension Master Gardener and can be found gardening this summer in her North Portland garden. Connect with her and other gardeners at facebook.com/sassygardener.

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