

The Sandy Post

Home & Garden

Early pruning prevents tangled raspberries

The best way to keep raspberry plants from becoming a tangled, unmanageable thicket of canes is to prune and train them in the early spring before growth begins.

Pruning involves removing weak canes and cutting back the tips of long canes. It also helps maintain a trellis system if used.

The canes of one-crop raspberry varieties is biennial; that is, they grow the first year and produce fruit the second year. The new canes that appeared last summer will yield next summer's berries.

Although pruning the tips of new canes will remove some flower buds that would form fruit, the remaining buds will make larger and better fruit.

The canes that bore fruit last summer should have been removed by now. If not, remove them first. Then cut out all but 10 or 12 healthy, new canes for each plant.

Cut out the weak and

spindly canes first, then select the healthiest canes that grew last summer to leave for fruiting this year.

Gardeners have two options for trellising. The simplest method is to use a strong wire attached to posts. The wire should be about five feet from the ground. The canes are tied to the wire.

Some gardeners use a three-wire support where two parallel wires are placed a couple of feet off the ground. The canes are trained between the two wires and the tops are tied to a third wire five feet off the ground.

Once the pruning is finished, the remaining canes should be tied to the top wire of the trellis system with a strong twine. Then prune the cane ends six inches to a foot above the wire.

Raspberries resent competition from weeds. Regular hoeing and the use of mulch along the row will maintain a weed-free area.

Soil testing reveals fertility and nutrients

Soil nutrient content and fertility status, two very important factors in successful gardening, are most effectively revealed by soil testing.

The standard soil test is a laboratory chemical analysis of soil that determines the supply of available nutrients such as phosphorus, potassium, magnesium and calcium.

It also measures the soil acidity or alkalinity (pH) and the percent of organic matter. A soil test does not indicate if insects or diseases are present.

The results of a soil test can be used to make recommendations for fertilizer needs and lime requirements. Soil tests prevent the application of unneeded fertilizer, and ensures proper nutrient levels

for a productive, high quality yield.

A yearly soil test is not required or recommended. Gardeners probably have a good idea of the fertility needs of plots they have successfully gardened before.

On the other hand, testing soil that is being gardened for the first time should be considered. And a soil test may be needed if there are problems in the garden that are suspected to be related to soil fertility.

The cost of a soil test varies with the number of elements to be tested. Soil testing service is offered by Oregon State University as well as other soil testing labs in Oregon. Gardeners should contact their county Extension office for more information.

Picking the right rose needn't be thorny issue

Gardeners looking for rose plants in garden stores and nurseries should be aware that most roses are graded by number to help shoppers find the best rose for their needs or wants.

The numbers on the plant label or listed in the nursery catalog indicate the size and quality of the rose bush.

A number one rose is the best. It has three or more canes (stems or branches) that are at least 18 inches long.

A number 1 1/2 rose should have at least two 18-inch canes. The number means the rose is slightly smaller or the root system may be lopsided or slightly damaged. Some pruning and shaping will probably be necessary after the rose has established itself in the flower bed. Planting time is generally in March and April.

Roses should be planted in well-drained flower beds that receive at least a half day of sunshine. After selecting the plant site, dig a hole 15 to 18 inches deep and about the same dimension in width.

Add a quart of peat moss or compost to the soil and mix well. Fashion the compost mixture into a cone or mound and put it in the planting hole.

Place the rose plant on the soil mix and spread the roots out and down to give them room. Then begin adding soil to the hole, working the dirt around the roots to get rid of air pockets. Fill the hole about three-fourths full, firming the soil as you go.

Then fill the remaining part of the hole with water and let it soak in. Add the water again and finish filling the hole with soil.



One of the first sure signs of spring is the emergence of flowers. They are supposed to be the result of April showers, but the mild winter has caused many flowers, such as this daffodil, to bloom early.

Vegetable season underway

Gardeners who like to start the growing season early by raising vegetable seedlings indoors can start their cool season crop transplants from mid to late February.

Cool season crops are those vegetables that grow best in the cooler temperatures of early spring (50 to 65 degrees). The quality of some cool season crops such as lettuce, chard, cabbage, cauliflower, cress, endive, beets and onions is reduced by summer heat.

Generally, gardeners should plant seeds for transplants about a month before the seedlings can be planted outdoors.

In many parts of Oregon, cool season crops should be planted outside in April as soon as the soil can be worked. However, growing conditions can vary within a small area so gardeners who are unsure of planting times should check with local gardeners or gardening stores.

There are two basic approaches to growing transplants: 1) plant seed in a starter flat and move them to individual pots after the plants have come up; 2) plant seeds directly into individual pots.

When growing transplants, consideration should be given to the soil mixture, seed planting

depth, temperature and watering.

A serious problem encountered when growing vegetable transplants is a disease known as "damping off," which attacks germinating seeds and small seedlings. The disease can be partially overcome by using a sterilized soil mix.

Commercial potting or rooting mediums that are soil-less and sterile may be purchased. Or a homemade mix can be made by blending one part garden soil, one part peat moss or screened compost and one part sand or perlite.

Then place the mix in a two or three inch deep baking pan. Bake the soil mixture in a 180 degree oven for 30 to 45 minutes. Turn off the heat, but wait until the oven cools before removing the soil.

Seed planting depth should be carefully observed. Shallow planting is recommended for seedlings. Generally, a suitable planting depth is equal to about twice the diameter of the seed.

This means a thin covering of soil mixture at the most.

After sowing the seed, the planting mix should be watered by placing the seedling containers in a pan of water and letting the water seep upward. Watering from the top runs the risk

of washing away the seeds.

In the case of seedling flats, this procedure may not be possible. Simply water them with care.

Seeds need a temperature of 75 to 80 degrees in order to germinate rapidly. Once germination has taken place, move the seedlings to a cooler area. Cool season crops do best in a temperature range of 50 to 65 degrees.

A spot with good air circulation will help prevent mold and damping off.

Once the seedlings are an inch high, or have formed their first true leaves, they should be transplanted to small pots, or spaced out in a larger flat where they will have room to develop.

Only cool season crops should be started as seedlings during February, and then only if you know you can transplant them in early April. A common mistake is to become too anxious to get started and plant seeds too early.

The result is usually stunted and spindly plants that may die or produce little when transplanted outside.

Peas are one cool season crop that should not be started as transplants. They do best if seeded directly in the garden as soon as the soil can be worked. Peas can be planted as early as January on the Oregon coast.

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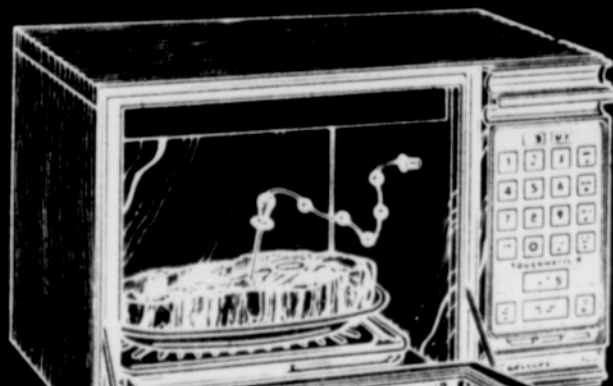
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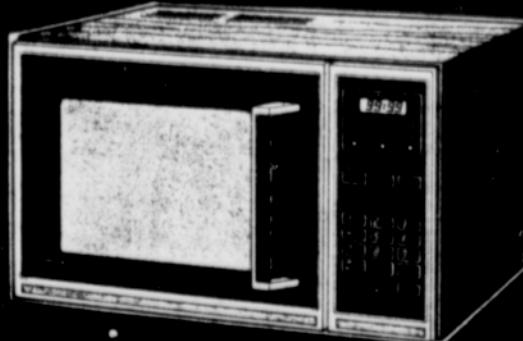
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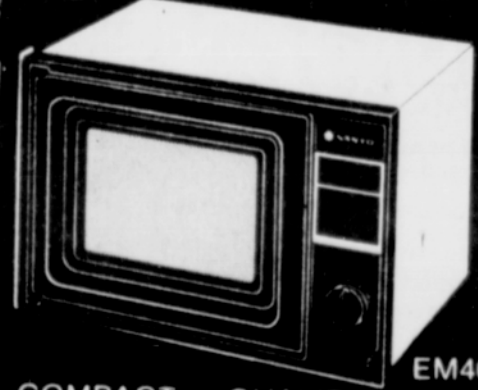
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