

Planting: Blackberries are a very productive fruit in Florida, adapted to our usually sandy soils. They very much prefer an area with almost a full day of sun, though will produce smaller yields in partial shade.

When planting, make sure the area chosen has well draining soils, blackberries do not like wet feet. Prepare the hole by digging it a little larger than the pot the plant is in and then mix the soil in your yard 50/50 with our **Rockledge Gardens Planting Mix**. The addition of **Espoma Bio-tone Starter** at this point will aid in quicker rooting. Once the hole is prepared, take your blackberry out of the pot and place it into the hole, making sure that the surface of the soil around your blackberry is right at, or just slightly above, the soil level at the top of your hole. After the soil has been replaced in the hole, make sure to water your blackberry thoroughly.

Blackberries are easier to maintain away from large structures, as the suckers they send up can be pervasive and hard to pull out. Usually it is wise to train them on a trellis or support for easier harvest and better growth. Make sure to keep the soil around your berry moist, but not soaking wet, for the first month it is in the ground.

Fertilizing: Use a balanced fertilizer such as **Espoma Plant-Tone** three times a year in February, May, and September.

Pruning: Blackberries tend to become rampant if left unattended, so a good pruning just after harvest will keep it from becoming overgrown. Canes which have fruited will not fruit again, so those should be cut to the ground. Usually leaving 5-10 canes from this year's growth in a 5ft area is best. Tip blackberry canes when they reach 30-36 inches to encourage branching.

Plant Problems: Blackberries have a few fungus and pest problems, but typically cutting old canes out of the group takes care of this. Treat as necessary, or cut the whole plant to the ground after fruiting to allow for clean growth next year.

Blackberry Varieties

- **Arapaho** - An erect, thornless, early ripening variety with medium sized fruit. Developed at the University of Arkansas.
- **Black Satin** - A semi-erect, thornless variety with medium sized tart fruit ripening in June or July.
- **Brazos** - An erect, thorny variety with large fruit great for cooking or processing into preserves. It is very tart until fully ripe in mid to late May.
- **Kiowa** - An erect thorny variety with very large fruit. Flavor is good, and the texture is firm. Ripens in mid to late June.
- **Natchez** - An erect thornless variety with high yields of medium to large berries. Firm texture and good sweet flavor. Ripens in early to mid June.
- **Navaho** - An erect thornless variety with moderate to high yields of medium sized sweet berries. Ripens in late June to early July.
- **Quachita** - An erect thornless variety with high yields of large sweet fruit that keep well after harvest. Fruit usually ripens in early to mid June.
- **Prime Jan** - An erect, thorny variety that fruits on first year canes. Fruits are large and tart, ripening on first year canes in July, and second year canes in June.
- **Rosborough** - An erect, thorny variety with high yields of sweet-tart berries. Fruit is medium sized and ripens in early June most years.
- **Shawnee** - An erect, thorny variety with high yields of large, soft berries which ripen over several weeks in June, allowing for extended harvest.

