

THE EDIBLE GARDEN



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GARDEN NOTES

- Test previous years' seeds for viability. Many seeds are viable for several years, when stored in a cool dry environment. To test old seed for viability:
 - A. Place the seed into a glass of water, seeds that sink have a good chance of growing. Discard those that float to the top.
 - B. Place 20 or so seeds left over from last year's packet between two moist paper towels for a few days. Remoisten the towels often and lift a corner to check for germination. Use the percentage of germinated seed as a guide for how many to sow. The top of the refrigerator is a good place to do this experiment as most seeds like warmth to initiate germination.
- Order your garden seeds now.
- Visit Seedy Saturday for a swap. In Ottawa this takes place on 7th March, at Ron Kolbus Lakeside Centre, Britannia Beach, 102 Greenview ave, Ottawa
- Or Seedy Sunday 8th March at the Royal Canadian Legion, Perth.

<http://www.seeds.ca/events>

DID YOU KNOW?

- **Drupe** – fruit containing a single seed within a stone (hard woody seed coating) surrounded by a fleshy area contained by a thin outer skin. Members of the genus *Prunus*: cherries and peaches, are examples of drupes.
- **Pome** – a fleshy fruit such as an apple with an inner core often containing several seeds. The flesh develops from the receptacle of the flower.
- **Aggregate fruit** – a fruit made up of a number of smaller fruits or fruitlets. Some examples are raspberries and strawberries.
- **Actinidia** or Kiwi except for a few cultivars, needs cross-pollination between a male non-fruiting vine and a female fruiting vine. One example of a self-pollinating kiwi is *Actinidia arguta* 'Issai'. It does even better if cross-pollination is available.
- **Beach Plum** *Prunus maritima* is native to North America and was important to both Indigenous peoples and European settlers in early times.
- **Late winter**, before the buds swell is an excellent time for pruning fruit trees to simulate new growth
- **Early summer** pruning in June-early July reduces vegetative growth and has a dwarfing effect

If we have been somewhat sedentary through the winter months it is time for us all to get into shape for the gardening season by strengthening our backs and other important gardening muscles.

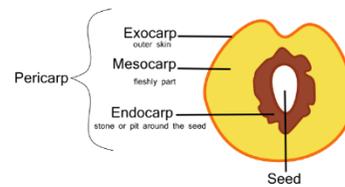
FRUITS AT THE READY

Mary Reid,
Master Gardener of Ottawa Carleton

Fruits at the ready...what better way to enjoy a fresh strawberry, raspberry or blueberry than from your own garden. No travelling to the local picking farm; no searching out your debit card at the grocery store; no racing out to the local farmers' market only to find that they're sold out. There's nothing wrong with these foodie adventures but why not create adventure on your own patch?

In Zones 5a and 5b there is no shortage of fruit producing plants to 'pick' from. First, you need a fruit bush, tree or vine that is going to bloom for you. Then you consider space and sun needs in relation to whatever else you have in your garden. Nicely prepared soil never hurts. Then WATER_WATER WATER – provide water daily for 2 weeks and weekly thereafter for the balance of the first season. A handful of bone meal or transplanter food at planting time is a bonus. Most fruits bloom early so try not to plant them in a frost pocket.

If you have a touch of shade in your garden you can consider currants, blackberries, elderberries, gooseberries, goji berries, and even the hardy 'Issai' kiwi. Strawberries, raspberries, blueberries and haskaps are sun lovers.



Cross section -Peach

So your fruit producer now has pollinated flowers. Their fruits mature and often have seeds. In addition to seed, fruits have pericarps that are made up of endocarp, mesocarp and exocarp which are basically layers of varying thickness. A fruit can be a pome like an apple, or a drupe like a peach. The fruits that are pretty easy to grow in our gardens, often called berries, are actually aggregate or multiple fruits. A true berry is a compound ovary with more than one seed, such as a grape.

'Soft fruits', easier-to-grow selections to enjoy in your garden, often grew as woodland plants before they were cultivated. With these you can't be selfish. The birds and little critters are going to want to share with you. That's just life and perhaps not a terrible thing, as soft fruits often spoil easily.

Most of these fruit producers are pretty self-sufficient and resistant to pests and diseases. The fruits of bush and cane plants are often formed on last year's wood, so pruning them in the fall or in the early spring would have negative results. It isn't wise to start telling these plants in the fall how they are going to grow next year. If the branches are young and tender, you might need to cage your fruit bushes to prevent over-zealous munching from furry creatures.

Some of my favorites include:

Goji Berry (*Lycium barbarum*) - Imagine a 3m high goji berry that thrives in poor soil. We read about its miracle properties. Apparently it can fix anything that ails you. 'Dynamite' and 'Firecracker' are reliable choices.

Strawberry - With about 30 strawberry plants, you can feed an average sized family. You will want a mix of the day-neutral varieties that give you a bit of a feast early on and then later in the season. Coupled with juicy one-harvest kinds like 'Veestar' or 'Redcoat' that form buds on last year for this year's fruit you will have rounded out your planting.

Saskatoons (*Amelanchier alnifolia*) - For any of you that want a taste of the prairies in your garden a 'Smokey' or a 'Thiessen' Saskatoon will reward you well. Saskatoon's always benefit from a second bush for cross pollination, but it's not absolutely necessary. The berries make delicious jams, pies and wine. Enjoy!

Raspberries - The scope of raspberries is immense. Have a look at Helen Halpenny's accompanying article.

Currants - Black, red and white currants are probably going to be enjoyed by our feathered friends – unless you apply netting before it's needed, as you would with grapes. Netting can be your recipe for success. You'll need about five bushes for an average sized family. Currants are a great source of vitamin C.

Honeyberry/Haskap (*Lonicera caerulea*) - You can't go wrong with a haskap or honeyberry –especially 'Borealis' and 'Tundra'. As their names suggest they are very cold hardy. Some were developed in Siberia and now many are bred in Saskatchewan. The fruits look like elongated blueberries. A haskap needs a second cultivar for cross pollination. The berries are ripe when the flesh inside and outside has become dark. Juices, jams and eating off the shrub! Yummy!

Blueberries Their gorgeous fall colour is something to look forward to in addition to fruit to munch on or cook with. Select high- or low-bush blueberries depending on available space. Acidic soil is preferred. Blueberries benefit from the company of a second bush of a different variety.

Cranberries– Cranberries also prefer an acidic soil. Chlorosis sets in if the soil is alkaline. Cranberries are best for juice, jam,

sauce or dried fruit.

Kiwis (*Actinidia arguta*) - Why not round out your year with a hardy Kiwi 'Issai' vine? This particular Kiwi is self-pollinating. Although it is far smaller than what you'll find at the fruit store, it's just as tasty. Kiwi 'Issai' bears fruit early in its life, and you can also enjoy the slightly fragrant greenish white flowers earlier in the season.

Truly these are plants that keep on giving...early blooms and then a snack or a dessert or a jam or jelly...juice or wine! Handy treats and they keep you in the gardening spirit!



Kiwi

GROWING RASPBERRIES

*Helen Halpenny,
Lanark County Master Gardeners*

Fruit and vegetables grown in the home garden and picked at the peak of perfection taste the absolute best. Among the easiest fruits to grow are raspberries. Yes, you need space and good soil but the rewards are great. Prepare the soil well because the raspberry patch will be in situ for several years.

There are many varieties of raspberries available at nurseries. 'Red Boyne' is very hardy and flavor is excellent. 'Nova' is a new variety developed in Nova Scotia. There are yellow raspberries, purple and black varieties as well. Most bear fruit about mid-July, but there are also ever-bearing kinds and these are my favourites. My Heritage raspberries bear a few fruits in July, (the robins get most of these if I don't cover with a net), and the main crop starts in mid-September after the birds and most insects have fled to warmer places. This fall crop lasts until a hard frost. Since this type of raspberry bears fruit on first year growth the canes that have fruited may be mown down in late fall.

Raspberries plants should be planted in full sun in moisture-retentive but well drained soil. A sheltered site is best as strong winds can damage canes. Rows should run north-south to get maximum sun. In home gardens a single row works well. New canes should be planted 12-15 inches (30 to 38 cm) apart and about 3 inches (8cm) deep. To prevent canes toppling over and to keep the fruit clean it is necessary to support the canes. A double fence with parallel wires stretched between end posts works well. Cross bars between the wires will hold the canes upright. Canes are sometimes tied to the wires.

Raspberry stems or canes are biennial, in that they grow vegetatively the first year, flower and fruit in their second year and die back to ground level. The root system is perennial and of suckering habit, producing each growing season new replacement canes. In the first two seasons after planting the number of canes may be few, but thereafter there should be more than enough. Spindly canes can be pruned out so the others can grow stronger. Allow about 4-8 canes to a root. So, in their second year a small crop will be produced and a fuller crop in later years. A row of raspberries will keep up production for ten years.

After fruiting is over, cut old canes to ground level. Burn diseased canes. In late winter cut canes to a bud about 160 cm above ground. This removes winter damage to the tips and encourages the lowest buds to break. In early spring a balanced fertilizer can be applied and a 5 cm (2 inches) mulch or compost will help keep weeds at bay. Unwanted suckers can be hoed out during summer or dug out and replanted to increase your plot. In dry weather water the raspberries regularly.

Several insects damage raspberry plants. The cane borer is the worst culprit in my garden. In June, adult beetles cut two rings around the stem about 1 cm (1/2 inch) apart and 25 cm (10 inches) below the tip of a new shoot. An egg is laid between the rings and the tip of the shoot wilts and dies. Larvae bore down to the root and kill the cane. Cut off and destroy the stem below the rings as soon as wilting is seen. Aphids can be a problem, if very numerous. A forceful spray of water will wash them away. The larvae of raspberry sawflies may chew large irregular holes in the leaves in spring but the damage is not usually harmful. Diseases, such as anthracnose and powdery mildew can be kept within limits by ensuring good air circulation by removing old canes after fruiting, thinning new canes, and keeping weeds removed. Spraying with lime sulphur in spring before bud break is beneficial.

BOOK REVIEW

*Edythe Falconer,
Master Gardener of Ottawa Carleton*

UNCOMMON FRUITS FOR EVERY GARDEN

Lee Reich Timber Press, 2004
ISBN-13: 978-0-88192-994-7

The word “lovely” gets overused but I am going to use it anyway. **Uncommon Fruits** is a “lovely” book. Its author is not only an expert in his field, he also writes beautifully or as some companion reviews note, “eloquently”. Each chapter, one per plant, is a delight to read, a small horticultural biography complete with horticultural family trees. Very few of us will end up growing all the plants featured in his book, we will, however, enjoy 23 “good reads”.

Each chapter begins with a history of the plant followed by a verbal description of the plant’s appearance, followed by more information on how to grow, propagate and care for it. Comprehensive lists of varieties and cultivars are provided in each chapter. Lists of sources are provided in the appendix.

51 colour photos grace the centre of this slim volume and these are certain to enhance interest in each plant featured. Black and white illustrations of plant form are included throughout the book. Many of this collection can readily be grown in Canadian plant hardiness zones and depending on which cultivars you choose - 17 out of 23 by my count. Except for ‘Beach Plum’ Reich indicates the U.S zones in which each of these plants might be expected to survive and thrive.

In the Appendix the author offers information on Nomenclature, Pollination, Siting and Planting, Pruning, Propagation and as noted earlier – Sources. This author’s enthusiasm is so contagious I’m already anxious to add new fruit-producing plants to my collection which already includes the Red Currant ‘Red Lake’ with its pearly iridescent clusters of crimson berries. The two I have in mind are Pawpaws and Lingonberries. Come to think about it though I may also search out ‘Beach Plum’. I’ve just checked on line and they are hardy to U.S. 3-7.

I will be looking for more of Reich’s gardening books!

RECIPE

*Dale Odorizzi,
Master Gardener of Lanark County*

BLUEBERRY COFFEE CAKE

This recipe comes from the Hornepayne Ontario Grace United Church Cookbook. Hornepayne is a small town in Northern Ontario that is home to some of the world’s greatest cooks and their cookbooks are my go-to source of inspiration.

1 ¾ cups all-purpose flour
3 teaspoon baking powder
½ teaspoon salt
¾ cup sugar
1 egg
¾ cup milk
1 to 2 cups blueberries
2 Tablespoon sugar
¼ cup shortening
1 teaspoon vanilla

Topping

½ cup flour
¼ cup butter
¼ cup brown sugar

1. Cream shortening and sugar.
2. Sift dry ingredients together in a separate bowl.
3. Add egg and vanilla to creamed shortening and sugar.
4. Add dry ingredients alternately with milk to the mixture.
5. Spread half of the batter into a well-greased 9” square pan. Spoon blueberries over batter. Sprinkle with 2 tbsp of sugar. Spread remaining batter over blueberries.
6. Blend topping until mealy, and then sprinkle over the top.
7. Bake at 375°F for 35 minutes.
8. Serve warm.

Visit the Almonte online community newspaper 'The Millstone' - <http://millstonenews.com/> -for a column by David Hinks of the Ottawa Carleton Master Gardeners; under the Gardening tab

Photographs: Kiwi- Edythe Falconer

The Edible Garden logo was created by Jon Last (jonlast13@rogers.com)

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