

BLACKBERRIES

- Resources: Organic Culture of Bramble Fruits (ATTRA):
<http://ww2.attra.ncat.org/index.php/bramble.html>
UC Fruit & Nut Research & Information Center – Backyard Orchard – Berries
<http://homeorchard.ucdavis.edu/berries.html>
UC IPM Pest Management Guidelines – Caneberries
<http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/selectnewpest.caneberry.html>
Mark Bolda, Farm Advisor – Caneberries, Santa Cruz Co. 831-763-8040
mpbolda@ucdavis.edu
Growing Boysenberries & Ollalie Blackberries, 1982, UCCE Publ. 2441
<http://anrcatalog.ucdavis.edu>
- Varieties: Based on Mark Bolda’s trials in Watsonville:
Ollalie: mid May-mid June harvest; high yields, trailing canes, thorny, low chill; med-lg fruit, very good flavor.
Apache: late June-mid July harvest; thornless, upright; very large fruit but not as sweet
Navaho: mid June- mid July (some to mid Aug); upright, thornless, doesn’t sucker well; med sized fruit, firm, glossy black, very good flavor
Triple Crown: mid July-mid Aug; thornless, semi-erect; Lg berries, very good flavor
- Plant: Jan-March
- Trellis: 5’ high, 2-3’ in the ground, 2 wires at 5’ and 3’.
- Spacing: 4-6’ apart in rows 8-10’ apart – depending on variety.
- Soils: Very adaptable. Should do fine in clay soils with pH 6-7.5.
- Water: Need regular irrigation – similar to tree fruit - but don’t like wet feet. Make sure they have adequate water when fruiting. The latest fruiting cultivar should be closest to the head so that you can cut back on water downstream after fruiting, if needed.
- Fertilizer: Don’t need much on clay soils. You may want to incorporate a few inches of compost into the bed prior to planting to improve aeration. Watch the plants - you may need to add N annually – maybe 1lb of N/100 feet.
- Training: Canes that grow the 1st year should be looped around the top & bottom wire 1-3 times (depending on cane length) in summer/fall and the end tipped to promote lateral branching. These are the canes that will fruit in year 2. Sometimes the lateral branches are pruned in spring to keep them under control. After fruiting, remove these 2 year old canes from the wire, pruning off close to the ground. New canes that emerged from the base in spring can then be trained up the wire and tipped. These will fruit next year.

Pests:

Relatively pest free. Red berry mite could be a problem on later varieties – oil sprays should control.

Weed control will be the biggest issue for organic production. It would be good to herbicide or otherwise eliminate any noxious, perennial weeds before planting. An annual 3-4” thick mulch (wood chips, compost, etc) down the row (2’ each side) should help if maintained. A planting of fine fescue which can go summer dormant and resume growth in fall could help to keep the weeds down so they don’t interfere with the sprawling canes in spring. It is low growing and can be mowed. Don’t till more than 3-4” deep or you’ll damage the shallow roots. Till before the sprawling canes interfere with tractor activity – and travel in 1 direction so as not to tangle canes. Careful of using Roundup – even after canes are tied up – as it can get absorbed by the canes and go down to the root.