

What is the best way to prune caneberries?

The answer to your question of course is that it depends.

First and foremost, caneberry growers recognize that the fruiting canes die once fruiting is completed. Most growers should let these dead canes remain for a time after fruiting, since carbohydrates move from the leaves into the canes and on down into the crown. Canes can be removed earlier for disease management, but outside of leaf and cane rust in Ollalieberry, cane diseases are not that common on the caneberry varieties currently grown in this area so this is less of a concern. With this in mind, in the Pajaro Valley pruning begins in October for certain varieties and continues for others until the middle of February.

The question of how to prune will depend on the type of caneberry grown. Primocane fruiting raspberries bear fruit in the first season and will fruit on laterals down from the tip of the cane. In most cases, fruiting advances completely down the canes in one season meaning that they can be mowed down to the base once they die back completely later in the fall. In the case of florican bearing varieties such as Nova and Prelude, just the tips have borne fruit in the fall after the much larger crop in the spring and these tips can be removed and the rest of the cane allowed to remain for the crop of the following year.

Trailing blackberries such as Ollalieberry have a growth habit quite distinct from other blackberries and raspberries and accordingly are managed differently. Growers of trailing blackberries will remove the dead, fruited canes in the fall, and also at this time tip the primocanes which will bear next year's crop. The canes are wrapped on a simple trellis system consisting of wires at approximately 18", 3 ft and 5.

Since erect and semi-erect blackberries pretty well can stand on their own, trellising is generally used as a secondary level of support and a form of managing the hedgerow. Pruning should consist of tipping plants back to somewhere in the area of 40 to 48 inches in height, although this can be more or less depending on the variety. Pruning of the primocanes of erect and semi-erect blackberry can occur early in the fall or late in the summer if the canes have reached the proper height.

This has been a brief guide to pruning caneberries in the Pajaro Valley. Please contact Mark Bolda at UCCE Santa Cruz if you have more questions on this topic or any other topics concerning blackberry, raspberry or strawberry production.