The Puget Sound region has an ideal raspberry-growing climate. The cost of fresh raspberries climbs higher each year at the grocery store, due in part to the fragility of the fruit and their special handling requirements. The best way to enjoy an abundance of fresh raspberries is to grow them yourself. They are quite easy to grow in the home garden.

Raspberries like full sun and a well-drained soil rich in organic matter. They do not like wet feet, so if your ground is wet, plant the berries on a mound or raised bed at least 18 inches above the water table. Before planting, add compost or composted manure to the soil. Compost or manure can also be used as a mulch to discourage weeds and conserve moisture. Plant your canes about 18” apart in rows 5 feet apart. Plant them in the ground at the same level as they were planted in the pot. New growth will rise from the roots or from the base of the planted cane.

Raspberries form tall canes, so they do best if tied to wires that are fastened between two stout posts. The upper wire should be 4 to 5 feet above the ground and the lower wire 2 ½ feet from the ground. Tie the canes to the wires securely but not too tightly.

Newly-planted roots should produce 3 to 5 canes the first year. On summer crop (one crop per year) varieties these canes will bear fruit the next year. On these varieties, once a cane has fruited it will begin to die and can be pruned out. The one-year-old canes that remain can then be thinned out the following winter, removing the weaker canes. Usually at least 7 to 10 canes are left per hill. The canes that are selected to remain can be cut back to head-height.

Everbearers normally produce two crops per year—summer and fall. They will produce a fall crop on their first-year canes, then a crop the following summer on the two-year old canes. They therefore need to be pruned differently than the summer crop varieties. Typically the fall crop appears on the top foot or so of the cane; after harvest, remove only the top portion of the cane that has fruited. Next year’s summer crop is produced on the remainder of the cane. Once the entire cane has fruited, it will begin to die and should be removed. In the winter, weaker canes can be removed.

Fertilize your raspberries in early spring and again after harvest with a well-balanced fertilizer such as Dr. Earth or E. B. Stone Rose and Flower Food. Be sure to use a fertilizer formulated to stimulate flowering/fruiting.

Root rot is the most common problem of raspberries. It is a soil-borne disease and there is no control for it. Infected plants should be destroyed. Future plantings need a new location with well-drained soil. Plant certified, virus-free stock; try to choose varieties that are tolerant of heavy soils. Try planting in raised beds if your soil is heavy.
SUMMER CROP (ONE CROP) VARIETIES

BOYNE: Dark-red, tender, and juicy. Flavor is aromatic and medium-sweet. Good for jams, jellies, and freezing. Ripens early to midseason, hardy and very productive. Somewhat tolerant of heavier soils.


CASCADE DELIGHT: Very large, firm, juicy red berries. Late ripening; excellent flavor. Vigorous and very productive; developed at WSU. Somewhat tolerant of heavier soils.

CASCADE GOLD: Large, golden berries with excellent flavor. Vigorous and very productive; midseason ripening. Developed at WSU. Not well adapted to heavier soils.

COHO: Very large, firm, juicy red berries. Very late ripening; extends the growing season. Excellent flavor. Vigorous and very productive; developed at OSU.

LATHAM: Abundant producer of medium sized red berries in mid summer. Good flavor, firm texture; excellent for freezing and preserves. One of the oldest raspberry cultivars. Somewhat tolerant of heavy soils.

MEEKER: Large, thimble-shaped, dark red with good sweet flavor. Developed at WSU—a standard-setter! Good home variety for eating fresh, freezing, and canning. Not well adapted to heavy soils, but vigorous and productive with a long harvest season. Some resistance to Botrytis.

TULAMEEN: Large, light-red fruit with fine flavor. Introduction from British Columbia. Extends the raspberry season through July and August—produces for up to 50 days.

WILLAMETTE: Extremely large, nearly round, dark red, firm berry. Lower sugar content with tart rich flavor. Excellent for fresh eating, canning, and freezing. Holds color and shape well. Plant is vigorous and productive. Requires well-drained soils and mild winters. Disease resistant.
EVERBEARING (TWO CROP) VARIETIES

AMITY: Dark-red, large and firm, with classic raspberry flavor and superior quality. Excellent for fresh eating, jams, jellies, and freezing. Plants are resistant to aphids and root rot, and can take somewhat heavy soils. Ripens July and September. Recommended for home gardens.

CAROLINE: Large medium red berry. Strong, rich, full flavor. Very productive—ripens until frost. Resistant to grey mold, very vigorous.

FALL GOLD: Golden everbearing, with medium, soft, very sweet berries. Excellent for eating fresh and processing. Ripens in July; second crop ripens from late August to frost. Hardy.

HERITAGE: Medium sized, attractive red fruit ripens in July and September. Erect canes are vigorous, needing little support.

BLACK OR PURPLE (ONE CROP) VARIETIES

JEWEL BLACK RASPBERRY: Large, firm, glossy black berries. Sweet flavor. Excellent for preserves, freezing, or fresh eating. Good yields on vigorous upright plants. Midseason.

MUNGER BLACK RASPBERRY: Large, firm, shiny black berries. Delicious, unique flavor; excellent in jams, jellies, and preserves, or for fresh eating. Excellent yields. Good disease resistance. Midseason.

PATIO VARIETY (BRAZELBERRY)

RASPBERRY SHORTCAKE: Medium size, round red berry. This revolutionary dwarf, thornless raspberry is specially bred to thrive in containers on patios, decks, and balconies. Three foot canes do not need staking. Raspberry Shortcake is a one-crop variety with a long season of harvest. Once fruiting is done, cut out the canes that fruited this year to encourage new canes that will set next year’s fruit.