A selection of these fruits can provide fresh berries from early July until the first severe frosts occur in the autumn. They provide a variety of flavours ranging from that of the true blackberry to those arising from crosses between raspberry with blackberry and other rubus species. All these berries will freeze well and make excellent jam. With good management and provided they remain free of virus infection, they will yield heavy crops for fifteen to twenty years.

**VARIETIES**

A.G.M. signifies the Award of Garden Merit, the Royal Horticultural Society’s most prestigious award.

**BLACK BUTTE** — This new blackberry variety from America is notable for its exceptional fruit size. The giant berries are attractive, uniformly shaped and of very good flavour. The plants are winter hardy and the canes are thorny. The fruit is well presented on strong laterals. Ripens early July to mid August.

**BOYSENBERRY (THORNLESS)** — This American hybrid yields heavy crops of large, round oblong shaped berries which commence to ripen at the end of July to a dull, dark-red colour. The fruit has a characteristic bramble flavour. The canes are thin, numerous and moderately vigorous.

**BUCKINGHAM TAYBERRY** — Discovered in Buckingham, this is a natural thornless mutation of the Tayberry, which would appear to be identical to the Tayberry in all other respects.

**FANTASIA** — Exclusive to Ken Muir this blackberry was discovered growing on an allotment in Surrey and thought to be a cross between Merton Thornless and Himalayan Giant. The canes are very vigorous, thick and thorny and bear outstanding crops of extremely large blackberries, some even larger than a fifty pence coin. Berry size does not diminish noticeably throughout the cropping season which commences from early August onwards. It has an excellent flavour and quality and is the only variety to have the subtle flavour of the wild blackberry. A.G.M.

**HELEN** — A early thornless blackberry raised from a cross between Silvan and an unnamed selection. The fruits are large, firm, long and conical in shape and have a bright regular appearance. The flavour is excellent, rich and aromatic. Commences to ripen early to mid-July, providing the first supply of blackberries in the season. In trials, no serious diseases have been seen on this variety.

**JAPANESE WINEBERRY** — Also known as the Chinese Blackberry, this particularly decorative plant produces canes which are covered with soft red bristles. The berries are golden-yellow, turning wine red when fully ripe in August. The fruits all mature together, so that the whole sprig can be cut off and served with cream for dessert. The berries are sweet, juicy and refreshing to taste.

**LOCH NESS** — A thornless blackberry raised at the S.C.R.I., Scotland. Unlike other varieties with their trailing habit of growth, Loch Ness produces stout semi-erect canes which become more erect in well established bushes and require the minimum of support. In trials the canes have shown considerable winter hardness. Usually about half the crop ripens in late August and the remainder throughout September. The fruits are large and the flavour is good when fully ripe. A.G.M.

**LOGANBERRY (THORNLESS)** — Raised in 1881, this remains the most popular of all hybrids. Ripening from the middle of July, the fruits are medium-sized, blunt conical in shape, dull dark red in colour and have quite a sharp flavour. The canes are only moderately vigorous. A.G.M.

**OREGON THORNLESS** — This variety yields light crops of firm, medium sized, shiny black berries that have a good sweet flavour. They ripen from late August onwards. The canes are moderately vigorous, whilst the foliage, being deeply indented, has an attractive bright green ‘parsley-leaf’ appearance which turns to bright autumn tints in the late season.
SILVAN — This blackberry is considered to be a variety of exceptional quality. The fruits, which are borne on canes with thorns, are larger than the Boysenberry (25mm [1in] diameter and 40mm [1\(\frac{1}{2}\)in] long) and the variety is more productive. It has displayed a high level of resistance to disease and is fairly tolerant to heavy soil, wind and drought. The fruit is ripe from early to mid-July onwards, providing the first supply of blackberries in the season, second only to Helen. A.G.M.

TAYBERRY — This comparatively new heavy yielding hybrid was raised at the S.C.R.I., Scotland. It has a long cropping period from early July to mid-August. The fruit is sweeter, much larger and more aromatic than that of the loganberry; blunt, chisel-shaped and dark red when fully ripe. The berries are borne on short laterals and are easy to pick. The canes are moderately vigorous and prickly. A.G.M.

VERONIQUE — A compact pink-flowering, thornless blackberry derived from Loch Ness. Produces heavy crops of large fruit of good flavour. Freezes well. No official trial data is available yet but early indications suggest that it has similar characteristics to Loch Ness.

WALDO — This early thornless blackberry from America, ripens mid to late July. The variety has good resistance to cane and leaf spot and does not appear susceptible to purple blotch. The thornless canes are semi-erect and moderately vigorous. However, the canes are rather brittle and can be damaged in exposed situations — they should be tied in early to avoid this from happening. The fruit is of superb quality, large and very firm with an intensely glossy black colour. They are also noted for the very small size of their seeds and hence make superb jam. The flavour is excellent.

The minimum distances that these cane fruits should be spaced in the row on soils of average fertility should be as follows:

- Black Butte 1.8m (6ft)
- Boysenberry 2.4m (8ft)
- Buckingham Tayberry 2.4m (8ft)
- Fantasia 4.5m (15ft)
- Helen 2.4m (8ft)
- Japanese Wineberry 1.8m (6ft)
- Loch Ness 1.8m (6ft)
- Oregon Thornless 2.4m (8ft)
- Silvan 4.5m (15ft)
- Tayberry 2.4m (8ft)
- Veronique 1.8m (6ft)
- Waldo 1.8m (6ft)

If the above plants are planted in one row, the row should be 1.8-2.1m (6-7ft) away from other fruits.

**MANURING**

With the exception of Fantasia, these fruits should be manured generously with a fertilizer containing nitrogen in order to encourage growth of the long lengths of cane required to cover the supporting wires. With Fantasia, the amount of nitrogen applied should be governed by the vigour of the canes. It may be advisable not to apply any at all in some years.

During March, or immediately following planting, whichever is the later, broadcast in a circle 45cm (18in) diameter round each plant:

\[
35\text{g (1\frac{1}{4}oz)} \text{Nitro-Chalk (calcium ammonium nitrate)} \\
10\text{g (1\frac{1}{4}oz)} \text{sulphate of potash}.
\]

Similarly, at the end of May and June broadcast:

\[
20\text{g (1\frac{1}{4}oz)} \text{Nitro-Chalk (calcium ammonium nitrate)}.
\]

In succeeding years each March, broadcast over a distance 90cm (3ft) on both sides of the rows or in a circle 90cm (3ft) around individual bushes:

\[
20\text{g/m}^2 (\frac{1}{4}oz/\text{yd}^2) \text{Nitro-Chalk (calcium ammonium nitrate)} \\
10\text{g/m}^2 (\frac{1}{4}oz/\text{yd}^2) \text{sulphate of potash}.
\]

Alternatively, a compound fertilizer may be used after planting and annually thereafter, following the manufacturer’s recommendations.
POST & WIRE SUPPORTS

These cane fruits are best grown on wires attached by vine eyes to a wall or fence or on a free standing framework of posts and wires. The wires should be 3.5mm (10 gauge). The end posts should be 10 x 10cm (4 x 4in) and 2.5m (8ft4in) in length, driven 75cm (30in) into the ground. Intermediate posts measuring 5 x 5cm (2 x 2in) should be positioned 3.9m (13ft) apart in the row. Four wires should be positioned at heights of 90, 120, 150 and 180cm (3, 4, 5 and 6ft respectively) loosely stapled to the intermediate posts and tightened around the end posts. An alternative method of supporting weaker growing varieties, such as Waldo or Loch Ness, is to tie their canes to a single, free standing stake 180 cm (6ft) out of the ground. The string used to loosely support the canes to the stake can be prevented from slipping down the stake by threading it through staples at 30cm (12in) intervals attached to the post.

METHOD FOR TRAINING THE CANES

There are several ways that the new canes can be trained; the simplest is to divide them into two lots and train them in opposite directions on the ground below the fruiting canes. They are kept in position by means of wooden pegs or short lengths of wire pushed into the ground. At the end of the winter after the spent fruiting cane has been removed, the new cane should be picked up off the ground, disentangled and trained in their fruiting positions, using all the supporting wires.

PRUNING

The existing cane growth on bare root plants should be pruned back to 30cm (12in) before planting; in June when the new shoots are growing strongly, the old canes should be cut down to soil level to prevent flowering and fruit production. In subsequent years, pruning of the spent fruiting canes may be carried out at any convenient time after picking stops and before growth starts in early spring.

CANE NUMBERS & THINNING

Some varieties produce large numbers of canes from the base of the plant, whilst other varieties produce few canes initially but secondary growth later on. To obtain high yields, as many canes as possible up to twenty four are required for each bush. In addition to these, a small number should be retained to allow for breakages. New canes in excess of these numbers should be removed in May and June whilst they are still short.
If there is sufficient space, it is worth considering planting two bushes and cropping them in alternate years. The advantages of biennial cropping are that the bushes are much easier to manage and to tie in, the fruit is easier to pick and pests and diseases can be controlled more effectively. The variety ‘Fantasia’ is so heavy cropping that it may not be necessary to plant two bushes, since the fruit harvested in its cropping year may be sufficient to stock the freezer for the family’s consumption during its ‘off’ year.

Biennial cropping is achieved by cutting the fruiting canes out at ground level, once their crop has all been harvested (which is done in any case whether the intention is to crop the bush annually or biennially). At the same time, the young canes (next year’s fruiting wood) produced during the summer months are cut out at ground level, though it is better to start cutting out these young canes from the time they emerge from the base of the bush in the spring and continuing to do so as they appear throughout the summer, rather than delaying the task until the fruit has all been picked. The bush will then be overwintering for the first time without any cane growth whatsoever. A new set of canes will appear in the spring from the base of the bush; these canes are tied in onto the supporting wires at intervals throughout the summer until the supporting structure or fence is completely covered. At this stage any further growth is pruned away; if an excessive number of canes are tied in it becomes counter-productive.

With the biennial cropping system, tying in is done during the summer months, usually once a fortnight and is completed by September. When blackberries are allowed to fruit every year, the tying in of the young canes is normally done during the autumn or winter months and involves separating the young canes from the fruiting canes as well as disentangling the young canes from one another.

With biennial cropping, there are no new canes growing up in front of the fruiting canes, making it difficult to pick the fruit. Furthermore, by pruning all the canes down to ground level in the autumn after harvest and burning them, the life cycle of pests and diseases will be interrupted.