

## **KIWI FRUIT**

### **Soil**

The soil should be acidic, with a pH of about 5-6.5, rich in organic matter and not too salty. If the soil is too basic, leaves will show nitrogen deficiency.

### **Planting and aftercare**

The best site to plant a kiwi fruit tree in a moderately sunny place, where they can ramble across a trellising system. They will tolerate a light shade, if needed. Vines should be protected from strong winds, since they can snap off new growth.

Water is fundamental to kiwifruit plants: they should be planted on a well drained soil and watered constantly, especially in summer when they usually undergo the most stress. Water is the single most important cause of kiwifruit tree exfoliation: leaves will usually turn brown and fall off if the plant has to endure constant stress.

A lot of nitrogen is needed, especially in the early season, so add a nitrogen-rich fertiliser early on. Adding nitrogen in late season may cause the fruit to store poorly, so it's a best practice to avoid overdoing it around March.

Subsequent fertilisation can be done in early summer.

Pruning is very important for adequate fruiting: since the vine usually grows on a wire system, it should be pruned where it forms a "pigtail" shape, at the end of the growth spurt.

After the plant has fruited, prune out the oldest canes, but only one or two, and train the younger ones. Once your plant grows, it will reach a peak of production at around 6-8 years. Prune in February, and give the plant a good dressing of well-rotted compost and some organic fertiliser each April. The plant is quite hardy in the winter, just don't water unless it is showing signs of stress. During the summer, feed with a good liquid fertiliser through the flowering and fruit-setting period, once a month until September.

## **RHUBARB**

Rhubarb is not a difficult plant to grow in the garden. It is an ideal choice for the first time vegetable grower. It is a hardy perennial plant.

### **Soil**

Rhubarb grows best in well drained soil that is rich in organic matter. It is happy in an acid soil.

### **Planting and aftercare**

Before planting work plenty of rotted manure or compost into the soil to enrich it. Dig a hole slightly bigger than the plant or crown. The top of the crown should sit just above the surface of the soil.

The crowns require planting about 1m (3 feet) apart to prevent crowding and to allow the plant to establish a large root system. During the first year after planting the stalks should not be picked as this can affect subsequent crops as it weakens the plant.

When seed stalks are produced by the plant it is advisable to cut these as the plant will put its energy in to seed production, rather than edible stalk production.

## **SOFT FRUIT—BERRIES**

### **BLACKBERRIES**

#### **Description**

Blackberries are a good source of vitamin C, and also dietary fibre in the tiny seeds. The (usually) black fruit is not a true berry, botanically it is termed an aggregate fruit, composed of small drupelets.

#### **Soil**

Moisture-retentive but free-draining soil is preferred. If you have chalky, sandy, or heavy clay soil, improve with bulky organic matter before planting.

#### **Planting distances and aftercare**

Blackberries can tolerate light shade, but will be more productive in a sunny, sheltered site. A single plant can be incredibly productive, but if you plant more make sure they have plenty of room. Spacing depends on the vigour of the cultivar, ranging from 2.5m (8ft) to 4.5m (13ft) apart. When planting, cover the rootball with about 8cm (3") of soil.

Vigorous cultivars need a sturdy support system. Use a wall or fence, 1.5-2m high, with horizontal wires spaced 45cm (18in) apart, with the lowest wire 23cm (9in) from the ground. Alternatively, run the wires between two strong vertical posts.

After planting cut down all canes to a healthy bud. This may seem drastic, but it will ensure plants throw up lots of vigorous, healthy shoots in spring. Top-dress blackberries with 100g per square metre of general-purpose fertiliser in mid-spring and cover with a 7cm (3in) organic mulch annually. Make sure the mulch is placed 5cm (2in) away from the new canes and the crown to prevent rotting.

Water young plants every 7-10 days during dry spells. While mature plants shouldn't need extra watering, their fruit size will benefit from watering every 10-14 days if the summer is particularly dry.

Blackberries are vigorous and need regular pruning and training. Regularly tie in the shoots of newly-planted canes. Once these reach their first winter, cut back all sideshoots produced on these main canes to 5cm (2in). It is mainly from the resulting fruiting spurs that flowers are formed.

In the second year after planting the crown will throw up new canes from ground level. Loosely bundle these together; insert four bamboo canes in a square vertically around the crown and pull the new canes into the centre; then tie some sturdy twine around the square to hold the new canes in place. Remove the one-year-old canes once they have fruited by pruning them into shorter sections with loppers, then extracting them carefully to prevent their thorns snagging on new canes. Then untie the twine around the new canes and train them along the wires.

The fruit starts to ripen from mid-summer onwards. They are best picked as soon as they are ripe, and then either eaten fresh, frozen, or used in jams, jellies, and other cooking.

## **BLUEBERRIES**

### **Description**

Blueberries are a relatively easy crop to grow. The plants are decorative as well as productive. Scented flowers in spring, vibrant red/gold autumnal colours with coloured stems in winter – a long season of interest plant PLUS delicious berries that purport to have many health giving properties.

### **Soil**

Free draining soil is essential, blueberries hate wet feet. pH should ideally be between 4.5-5.5, most will tolerate up to a pH of 6 if plenty of organic matter such as peat, pine bark chippings or leaf mould are incorporated into the soil. Animal manures are not suitable. If your soil is not the required pH consider pot culture or raised beds & use a good ericaceous compost.

### **Site/Planting**

Select a sheltered sunny spot, this will encourage a good crop of well flavoured berries – avoid over shady spots.

Plant at 1.5m centres (Sunshine Blue 1.2m centres)

Plants do not usually require support.

Plant at the depth the plant had been growing in its pot incorporating plenty of peat or rotted pine chips into the planting pit.

Mulch the planting area with a good 50cm (2") layer of rotted pine chips.

All the varieties we offer are self fertile although heavier crops may be achieved by planting more than one variety.

### **Water**

Remember do not allow the plants to go short of water, especially when the fruit is forming and swelling. Your holiday periods must be covered. Ideally use rain water only unless you know your tap water to be of a low pH.

### **Feeding**

Use a balanced ericaceous fertiliser to top dress your plants each spring (end April). Feed again at the end of June as your plants will have a second growth period in late summer. Fertilisers used for tomatoes and other vegetables are not usually suitable for blueberries as they contain the wrong balance of nutrients.

### **Protection**

Protection from birds is essential – they too have read about the health giving properties of blueberries and will beat you to them!!

### **Pruning**

Blueberries fruit on short side branches of 1 year old wood and on the tips of strong young canes that are produced in late summer. Pruning is therefore targeted at building up a framework of fruit bearing side branches. Best cropping begins 2 years after planting

Pruning is undertaken after leaf fall when the plants are dormant. In the first 2 years after planting very little pruning is needed except to shorten the long canes that grow in late summer. These should be shortened by about half - although you will be removing some tip fruiting potential you are improving the framework and hence fruiting potential for the future years.

## **OTHER FRUIT**

### **FIGS**

#### **Description**

Though considered very many warm-country plants, figs will do remarkably well outside in quite temperate areas and in a cold greenhouse or conservatory in cooler regions. In these places they produce tiny fruits in late summer, which over-winter to swell and ripen the following summer. The fig bears two to three crops each year but only one ripens in our climate. The second crop of figs never ripens and should be removed in November.

#### **Soil**

Figs are quite soil tolerant, though they require good drainage. Indeed, too rich a soil is to be avoided or growth will be lush at the expense of the fruit.

#### **Planting distances and aftercare**

Figs are best grown on a south or west-facing wall. Root restriction should be provided to keep the tree compact and fruitful, as without it the fig is liable to grow large and remain vegetative. Line a pit 1m<sup>3</sup> with paving slabs or similar material, ensuring drainage is still available.

Prune by removing weak, damaged or overcrowded shoots in November.

Remove all embryo figs that are larger than a pea. When growth starts, tie in the shoots to form a fan shape, and before mid-summer pinch out the tips of young growth when they have reached five leaves.

In March each year, broadcast over the rooting are 70gm/m<sup>2</sup> (2oz/yd<sup>2</sup>) of compound fertiliser. The fig does not produce visible flowers; they are enclosed within the centre of the fruit. Varieties grown in this country do not require pollination and the fruits are seedless.

Figs are ready for harvesting when they become soft and hang downwards. Small splits develop in the skin and a drop of nectar may be exuded from the eye of the fruit. Inspect them regularly, as ripe figs will soon rot on the tree or be eaten by birds!

### **GRAPEVINES**

#### **Description**

Whether eaten fresh off the vine, pressed into juice or made into wine, grapes are a delicious and decorative addition to your garden.

#### **Planting Grapes and aftercare**

Choose a site free from both late spring frosts and early fall frosts. Grapes require heat so plant your vine where it will get the most sun. Grapes do well in most soils as long as you have good drainage. Wet or heavy clay soils are not good for grapes. An ideal pH level for grapes is 6.5 but they grow well between 6.5 and 7.5.

Your grape vine will need frequent watering in its first year to encourage healthy root growth. Pinch out any grape clusters and don't allow the plant to produce fruit in the first year. This is the time for your vine to use all its strength to produce strong roots. If you have used compost when planting your vine you will not likely need to fertilize it again. Pruning a grape vine is intended to distribute the fruit bearing wood evenly over the vine and open up the canopy to aid in air circulation, discouraging disease. Grapes should be pruned yearly because fruits only form on buds that arise from the previous season's growth.

## SOFT FRUIT—CURRANTS

### BLACKCURRANTS

#### **Description**

Blackcurrants take up a lot of room but are popular and well worth growing. Unfortunately there is not really successful space-saving way to grow them, so gardeners with a small plot are best advised to restrict themselves to a compact variety.

#### **Soil**

Blackcurrants will grow in any average soil, but resent dry conditions, so the ground should be well prepared, plenty of organic matter should be dug in.

#### **Planting distances and aftercare**

Blackcurrant plants are vigorous and hungry; plant them 1.2-1.5m(4-5ft) apart. Unlike red and white currants, blackcurrants are grown on a bush rather than a leg, so they should be planted slightly lower in the soil than they grew in the nursery. After planting cut all shoots right down to ground level to encourage strong, vigorous growth from the base. This means that no fruit will be borne the first year after planting, but a good, strong bush will develop. The following winter no pruning is necessary. In subsequent winters those shoots that have fruited should be cut out completely to encourage further growth from the base. It may not be possible to cut right to the ground, so prune to just above a new shoot as near the base as possible. In early spring feed with a high-potash general fertiliser.

### REDCURRANTS

#### **Description**

Redcurrants are grown in exactly the same way as gooseberries and they too are self-fertile, so there is no need to grow two varieties. Both gooseberries and redcurrants can be grown on a standard stem. They make attractive bushes, ideally suited to a small garden, allowing you to grow other plants underneath e.g. Poached egg plant, Thyme or Lavender.

#### **Soil**

Redcurrants prefer well-drained soil and benefit from a dressing of well-rotted compost every second year.

#### **Planting distances**

Bushes are planted 1.5m (5ft) apart, and cordons so that there is a distance of 30cm(1ft) between the upright 'arms'. Gooseberries grown alternately with redcurrants look very attractive.

#### **Pruning, mulching and feeding**

Cordons: Prune them in summer immediately after harvesting, reducing the side shoots to about 2.5cm(1in) from the old wood.

Bushes: In winter reduce the leading shoots by about half and remove any dead, diseased or over-crowded branches. In summer the side shoots should be reduced to about 7.5cm(3in).

**Mulching:** After pruning, mulch around the plants with a thick, weed-inhibiting mulch e.g. spent mushroom compost, forest bark or garden compost.

**Feeding:** Apply 10g (1/2oz) per m<sup>2</sup> sulphate of potash in spring or if you prefer organic methods, pelleted chicken manure.

Thereafter each year:

- Remove all weak growth from the base
- Remove all dead or diseased or misplaced branches or shoots
- Remove all old shoots that have fruited by cutting back to the next healthy strong shoot or bud.
- Remove and burn or shred and compost all prunings.

At the end of the pruning session on a mature bush you will have removed about 1/6<sup>th</sup> of the bush.

#### **Pests & Disease**

Blueberries suffer from very few Pest & Disease problems. Warm damp conditions can encourage fungal infections such as Botrytis (Grey mould). This can be controlled with systemic fungicides, better still ensure a good air flow around and within your plants and good clean hygienic cultural conditions. Yellow, unhealthy looking leaves in summer can indicate an incorrect soil pH check your soil and water.

### GOJI BERRIES

A Goji berry plant is an unusual plant that is gaining favor with home gardeners who want to grow food-producing plants. The Goji berry is high in antioxidants, fatty acids and a number of amino acids that are beneficial to the body.

#### **Soil**

Plant in soil that has excellent drainage. If you have clay soil or the area you have chosen to plant the Goji plant has poor drainage, it will be necessary to add a little sand or organic materials to the area. You can add potting soil, peat moss or compost to make the soil drain more efficiently.

#### **Site/Planting**

Plant the Goji berry plant after the last frost of the winter or spring is over. Plant it in an area that receives full sun. It is drought-tolerant and does not need to be watered often, but watering may help it grow faster. If your area receives regular rainfall, this will be enough to sustain the Goji berry plant. If your area receives rain less than once a week, the plant will need to be watered.

#### **Pruning and aftercare**

Pruning is best undertaken in the early Spring just as the plant breaks into growth. pruning is best kept to a minimum in order to maximise fruit yield - though Goji's will recover well from hard pruning.

### GOOSEBERRIES

#### **Description**

Gooseberries are the earliest of the soft fruits and are welcome just for that. They are all self-fertile, so there is no need to grow two varieties. Both gooseberries and redcurrants can be grown on a standard stem. They make attractive bushes, ideally suited to a small garden, allowing you to grow other plants underneath e.g. Poached egg plant, Thyme or Lavender.

#### **Soil**

Ideally gooseberries should be given a well-drained soil in sun, but they will tolerate semi-shade although the berries will ripen later. It is worth buying a variety that is resistant to mildew, especially in a dry area.

## **Planting distances**

Bushes are planted 1.5m(5ft) apart, and cordons so that there is a distance of 30cm(1ft) between the upright 'arms'. Gooseberries grown alternately with redcurrants look very attractive.

## **Pruning, mulching and feeding**

Cordons: Prune them in summer immediately after harvesting, reducing the side shoots to about 2.5cm(1in) from the old wood.

Bushes: In winter reduce the leading shoots by about half and remove any dead, diseased or over-crowded branches. In summer the side shoots should be reduced to about 7.5cm(3in).

**Mulching:** After pruning, mulch around the plants with a thick, weed-inhibiting mulch e.g. spent mushroom compost, forest bark or garden compost.

**Feeding:** Like all fruit bushes, gooseberries will respond well to a dressing of fertiliser in early spring. Use a high-potash rose feed or, if you prefer organic methods, pelleted chicken manure.

## **LOGANBERRIES**

### **Description**

The loganberry produces juicy red berries that can be used for a variety of things, ranging from dessert topping to jellies and jams. Tending slightly towards the tart or tangy side, they are usually harvested between July and September depending where you live. Loganberries grow on one-year old canes, so that the new canes that grow this season will bear fruit next year.

### **Soil**

Heavy, well-drained soils are preferred. Loganberries love rich soil and respond to generous manuring. Nitrogen is the most important plant food requirement.

### **Planting and aftercare**

A sunny and open but sheltered site is best with protection from northeast winds. The rows should run north south.

Do not prune a loganberry bush for the first year after it is planted. In the following years, as soon as harvesting has finished, cut down the 2 year old canes to ground level and prune the new canes back to approximately 8 inches high.

Prune for good air and light circulation.

Remove any dead or disease branches during the growing season to prevent the diseases from spreading to other plants.

## **RASPBERRIES**

### **Description**

Raspberries are easy to grow. By choosing varieties carefully it is possible to harvest from mid-summer through to the first frosts.

**NOTE:** Autumn-fruiting varieties are grown quite differently from summer-fruiting varieties.

## **Soil**

All raspberries need well-drained soil.

## **Planting distances and aftercare**

### Summer-fruit varieties:

Summer-fruiting raspberries are grown on a post and wire structure about 1.8m(6ft) high with horizontal wire 45cm(18") apart. Plant the canes 45cm (18") apart, allow 1.8m(6ft) between rows. After planting prune back hard and, as they grow, tie them in at about 10cm(4") intervals. The following year these canes will fruit, after fruiting these canes should be pruned right out and the new, young canes need to be tied in their place. In spring feed them with a high-potash general fertiliser.

### Autumn-fruiting varieties:

Autumn-fruiting varieties need no support. Prune them in late winter, cutting them right down to ground level and feed them with a high-potash fertiliser.

### Small gardens

In small gardens there may not be room for a full row of raspberries. In this case erect a single post with two crossbars nailed to the top and bottom. Fix wires to these and plant the canes in circle around the post. Tie them to the wires in the normal way.

## **STRAWBERRIES**

### **Description**

### **Soil**

Strawberries prefer a well-dug, free draining soil. If the soil is water-logged the plants will quickly attract a wide variety of mould disease.

### **Planting and aftercare**

It is important to plant strawberry plants to the correct depth - too low in the ground and the growing crown may rot, too high and the roots may dry out. Strawberries need lots of water until they are well established but don't water -log them. When established (around May), they should be OK without additional water. But when the fruits start to swell, begin to water again. Summer fruiting strawberries planted in spring and perpetual strawberries should have their first blooms pinched off to enable a good root system to establish. Strawberries planted in September can be left to flower and fruit in their first summer. In May, the plant will produce runners which have 'nodes' along them - these nodes are the beginning of new strawberry plants. The runners should be removed because they will sap the strength from the plant resulting in less fruit.

As the fruit begins to develop, their weight will cause them to lay on the ground. Before this happens (but no earlier than necessary), cover the soil around the plants with either straw. The straw will prevent the fruits from lying directly on the soil which will rot them.