



Raising small fruits in Wyoming ... 'berry' delicious!

By Karen Panter

Growing raspberries, strawberries, gooseberries, currants, grapes, and other small fruits can be interesting, challenging, and rewarding. Success depends on selecting the proper site and providing proper soil conditions and care to allow plants to flourish. Many can be grown in Wyoming commercially.

Most, but not all, small fruits grow and produce best in full sun. Avoid planting in areas near trees or large shrubs that compete for moisture and nutrients. Take advantage of sunny areas, and use locations protected from drying winds. Also avoid planting small fruits in areas where potatoes, tomatoes, peppers, eggplants, or other berries have grown within the past three years. These plants can harbor soil-borne diseases that might affect the new planting.

Growers should plan for long-term production. Strawberry plants, properly cared for, remain productive for three to five years. Raspberries often produce a good crop for 15 to 20 years. Grapes can survive for 40 to 100 years.

Raspberries

Raspberries are available in many varieties, whether red, black, gold, or purple. All are in the genus *Rubus*, and all have similar fruiting habits. Red raspberries come in either summer or fall fruit-bearing varieties. For a high volume of fruit and best freezing quality, grow a summer-bearing type. Grow a fall bearer for one crop in late summer, and use the fruit mainly for fresh eating.

Strawberries

Strawberry types (genus *Fragaria*) include June bearers, ever bearers, and day neutrals. June-bearing varieties produce only one crop per year in June/July. Everbearing strawberries produce two crops, one in June/early July and another in the fall.



Low Temperature Ranges for Cold Hardiness Zones 3, 4, 5

(Fahrenheit)

- **Zone 3**
-40 to -30
- **Zone 4**
-30 to -20
- **Zone 5**
-20 to -10

Day neutrals produce almost continuously throughout the growing season.

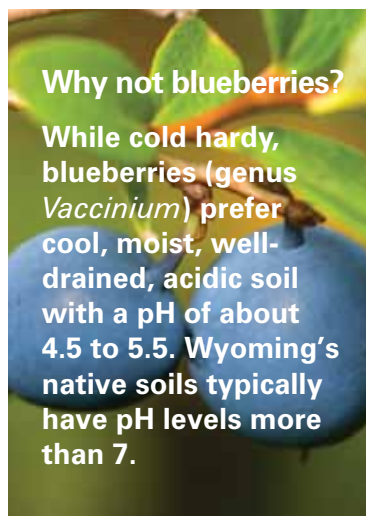
The fruit of ever bearers and day neutrals is smaller than that of June bearers, and total yields are often lower; however, the advantage of growing these types along with June bearers is that one can harvest fruit for most of the growing season. Note that day neutrals are the best choice for fresh fruit throughout the season because they have a longer fruiting period and better fruit quality. Unfortunately, retail nurseries often lump day neutrals and ever bearers together as "ever bearers."

Currants and Gooseberries

Currants and gooseberries are closely related perennial bush fruits, both belonging to the genus *Ribes*. Their relatively small plant size, ease of culture, and distinctive, attractive fruit make them well suited for home gardens and commercial plantings. Gooseberries and currants are very hardy and can be grown in most areas of Wyoming.

Black currants are prized for their distinctive flavor in juices, jellies, and liqueurs. They are also rich in vitamin C. Red currants are used mainly for fresh eating or jelly.

Gooseberries can have red-purple or green-yellow fruit and are eaten fresh or made into



Why not blueberries?

While cold hardy, blueberries (genus *Vaccinium*) prefer cool, moist, well-drained, acidic soil with a pH of about 4.5 to 5.5. Wyoming's native soils typically have pH levels more than 7.

jams, pies, and other desserts. Both currants and gooseberries can be frozen easily and kept for later use.

Gooseberries and currants do best in partially shaded locations or on north or northeast-facing slopes, where there is less likelihood of leaf and fruit scalding. Red currants and gooseberries generally are self-fruitful, so only one cultivar is needed for fruit production; however, both types produce larger fruit if more than one cultivar is planted, for cross-pollination. Some black currants are self-sterile and require a second cultivar for fruit production.

Grapes

Because grapes are self-fertile, only one cultivar is needed for fruit production; however, one may prefer growing several for variety. Cultivars differ in their suitability for eating fresh or as juice, wine, raisin, and jelly. Choose a cultivar that will mature in a particular area. Three types of grapes are grown in the United States, and each has specific qualities.

American cultivars (*Vitis labrusca*) have a strong musty flavor and aroma. These cultivars are used mostly for juice and fresh eating. European cultivars (*Vitis vinifera*) differ from American cultivars in fruit characteristics, vine growth habit, and climate adaptation. They have tight clusters, generally thin skins, and a wine-like flavor. They require more warm days for fruit maturation than do American types. French-American hybrids have some characteristics of both American and European types, depending on parentage.

Elderberries

There are many species of elderberries native to North America. The commercially grown species is *Sambucus canadensis*. The fruit can be used for juice, sauces, jellies, and wine. Elderberries sold through nurseries are often not distinguished by a cultivar

name. Although elderberries are partially self-fruitful, they will benefit from cross-pollination. Elderberries prefer full sun and grow in a wide range of soil types, from very wet to dry. Plants may grow to a height of 12 feet.

Saskatoon Berries

Saskatoons (*Amelanchier alnifolia*) are also known as juneberries, serviceberries, servisberries, and mountain blueberries. This species is native to North America. The plants are great ornamentals with attractive blossoms and good fall color. Fruit may be eaten fresh or used in pies, wines, jellies, jams, and syrups.

Detailed cultural guidelines can be found in the University of Wyoming Cooperative Extension Service (UW CES) manual *Sustainable Horticulture for Wyoming*, available for \$30 through the UW CES Resource Center at http://uwadmnweb.uwyo.edu/UWAG/Resource_Center.asp by clicking the Search button and typing the title in the Publication Title field, by e-mailing CESpubs@uwyo.edu, or by calling (307) 766-2115.

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Recommended small fruit varieties for Wyoming

(U.S. Department of Agriculture Cold Hardiness Zones in parentheses)

Raspberries

- Red summer bearing: Boyne (3), Canby (3), Latham (4), Liberty (3), Nordic (4)
- Red fall bearing: Amity (3), Autumn Bliss (4), Heritage (4), Redwing (4), September (3)
- Yellow fall bearing: Fallgold (4)
- Black: Bristol (4), Cumberland (4), Black Hawk (4)
- Purple: Royalty (4)

Strawberries

- June bearers: Dunlap (3), Guardian (3), Honeoye (3), Redcoat (3), Surecrop (3), Trumpeter (3)
- Everbearers: Fort Laramie (3), Ogallala (3), Ozark Beauty (3), Quinault (3)
- Day neutrals: Tristar (4-5), Tribute (4-5)

Currants

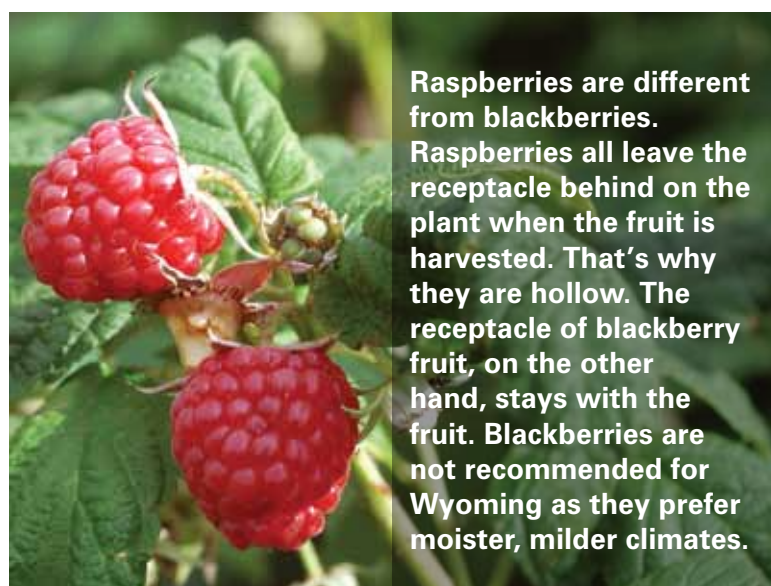
- Black: Consort (3), Crusader (3)
- Red: Wilder (4), Red Lake (4), Hinnomaki Red (4)
- Gooseberries: Pixwell (3), Captivator (3)
- Gooseberry x black currant hybrid: Jostaberry (4)
- Grapes: Beta (3), Bluebell (4), Canadice (5), Concord (4), Concord Seedless (5), DeChaunae (4), Elvira (4), Esprit (4), Frontenac (4), Himrod (5), Kay Gray (4), LaCrescent (4), Lacrosse (4), Marechal Foch (5), Prairie Star (4), Reliance (5), St. Croix (4), Seyval Blanc (4), Traminette (4), Swenson Red (4), Valiant (4), Worden (4)

Elderberries

- Adams (4), York (4)

Saskatoon berries

- Pembina (4), Northline (4), Smokey (4)



Raspberries are different from blackberries. Raspberries all leave the receptacle behind on the plant when the fruit is harvested. That's why they are hollow. The receptacle of blackberry fruit, on the other hand, stays with the fruit. Blackberries are not recommended for Wyoming as they prefer moister, milder climates.

