

Getting Started with Small Fruits

Many small fruits—strawberries, currants, blackberries, grapes, blueberries and raspberries—are well-suited to Maryland's growing conditions. Small fruit plants are generally long lived. If you're planning to grow them, pay special attention to cultivar selection. Cultivars should be adapted to your soil and climatic conditions. If possible, select cultivars with the fewest insect and disease problems. This fact sheet lists recommended cultivars for Maryland conditions. This is not an exhaustive list—many other cultivars may be grown successfully.

BUYING PLANTS

All small fruit plants are self-fertile. Only one plant is necessary for fruit production. However, blueberry yields and fruit size are greater when two or more varieties, with a similar bloom time, are planted together.

Small fruits are easy to propagate. Neighbors may offer you cuttings from grapevines, runners ("daughter plants") from strawberry patches or suckers or divisions from established bramble plants. In the last case, be aware that mature plants may be symptomless carriers of virus diseases. Black raspberries are especially susceptible to raspberry mosaic virus and should not be planted near red types. **Purchasing virus-free stock is recommended.** When planting raspberries and blackberries it is also best to eradicate any wild blackberries within 50 yards. Aphids can spread diseases from wild infected plants to your cultivated plants. Currants, gooseberries, and 'Jostaberry' (a cross between black currant and gooseberry) are hardy, productive members of the Ribes Family, that are underutilized in Maryland gardens. Black currants are an alternate host for white pine blister rust disease and until 1966 there was a federal prohibition against growing them. It is now legal to grow currants in Maryland. 'Crusader' and 'Consort' are two resistant black cultivars. Red and white currants are all resistant to this disease.

Buy the best nursery stock available from reputable nurseries that guarantee their plants to be true to name, of high quality, and packed and shipped correctly (a list of suppliers can be found on page 4.) Place your order early, specifying cultivar,

size, grade of plants desired, and preferred time of shipment. It is best to have the plants arrive when you are ready to set them out.

When your order arrives, unpack the bundles and inspect the plants. The roots should be moist and have a bright, fresh appearance. Shriveled roots indicate that the plants have been allowed to freeze or dry-out in storage or transit. Such plants seldom survive. Plant roots must be kept moist and free from freezing temperatures at all times.

If the plants cannot be set out immediately, they should be kept in cold storage by wrapping them loosely in a plastic bag with some holes cut for ventilation, and storing them at a temperature just above freezing. Moistened peat moss, sawdust or shredded newspaper can be used to keep roots from drying. Strawberry plants, in small quantities, may be held in the home refrigerator for a few days. If refrigerated storage is not available, remove the plants from the bundle, and carefully plant them in a trench of moist soil in a shaded location (this is called "heeling-in"). Pack the soil firmly around the roots to eliminate all air pockets and to prevent the roots from drying out.

PLANTING

Set out plants as soon as the soil can be worked in the spring or one month before the first fall frost (mid- to late September). Tissue-cultured bramble and strawberry plants, however, are tender and should be planted after the last spring frost. Select a full-sun location with deep, well-drained soil. Blueberry, currant, gooseberry and wineberry plants will produce a partial crop if grown in partial shade. The soil pH should be in the 6.2 - 6.8 range, except for blueberries which require a soil pH of 4.3 - 5.3. Large quantities of organic matter should not be added to a small planting hole. Incorporate well-rotted manure, compost or peat moss throughout the eventual root zone. Set plants at the same depth as they were planted in the nursery. **Make the planting hole 2-3 times the rootball width so the roots can be spread out.** Keep young plants well watered. Blueberries, in particular, will not tolerate water stress.

Small Fruit Variety Selection Chart

STRAWBERRIES

| <i>Variety</i> | <i>Comments</i> |
|------------------------|--|
| June-bearing | |
| Earliglow | The standard for early varieties. Very fine flavor; medium size fruit. |
| Annapolis | Large, firm, light red fruit with good flavor. |
| Allstar | Productive mid to late season cultivar with elongated flavorful berries. |
| Cavendish | Very large, firm fruit with good flavor. Mid-season harvest. |
| Jewel | Large, bright red, firm berries. Susceptible to verticillium and red steele. |
| Lateglow | Large, late maturing berry. |
| Mohawk ^a | Has Earliglow parentage. Slightly larger and earlier than Earliglow. Very winter-hardy. |
| Delmarvel ^a | Has Earliglow parentage. Vigorous, mid-season cultivar. Large, firm, very flavorful fruit. Low to moderate yields. |
| Primetime ^a | Has Earliglow parentage. Similar to Delmarvel. |
| Latestar ^a | Vigorous plants with large fruit that ripens after Lateglow. |

^a These are all recent releases with good disease resistance and appear to be well-adapted to Maryland conditions.

Day-Neutral

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| Tristar | University of Maryland release. Sweet, medium size fruit. Good disease resistance. Most productive in the fall. |
| Tribute | University of Maryland release. Vigorous, disease resistant plants, medium size berries. Somewhat acidic flavor. |

RASPBERRIES

| <i>Variety</i> | <i>Comments</i> |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Red (June-bearing)^a | |
| Latham | Mid season, cold-hardy variety that tolerates virus diseases. Flavorful, firm fruit. |
| Hilton | Vigorous, productive plants with large, flavorful berries. Very erect plant. |
| Titan | Very vigorous, cold-hardy cultivar but is susceptible to <i>Phytophthora</i> root rot. Large, mild fruit. Early harvest. |
| Taylor | Tall, vigorous, erect plants. Fruits are large and firm with excellent flavor. |

^a Bloom late April to late May; ripen June to July.

Red (primocane-bearing)

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|--------------|--|
| Heritage | Widely-adapted, vigorous variety suckers freely. Fruit is medium size, very high quality and tolerates light frosts. Harvest from mid to late August through severe frost or freeze. |
| Autumn Bliss | Large fruit, good yield. Two weeks earlier than Heritage. |
| Caroline | Large fruit with long fruiting period. |

Black^a

| | |
|---------|---|
| Allen | Vigorous, winter-hardy plants with disease resistance and large, high quality fruit. |
| Jewell | Vigorous and very productive mid-season cultivar with large, fine-flavored fruit and good disease resistance. |
| Haut | Developed at the University of Maryland. Medium size fruits; high yielding plants. |
| Bristol | Large fruit of excellent quality. Erect, vigorous plants but not as productive or disease resistant as other varieties. |

^a Bloom April-May; ripen June-July before red raspberries.

Purple^a

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| Brandywine | Vigorous, winter-hardy variety with canes that are large, erect and thorny. Very large, tangy fruit. |
| Royalty | Large fruit that becomes sweeter as it reaches full purple color. Very vigorous and productive canes. |

^a Bloom in June; ripen mid-July to mid-August in Central Maryland.

Gold

| | |
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| Fallgold | Primocane-bearing type that ripens with Heritage in late August into fall. Fruit is fairly soft with excellent flavor. |
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BLACKBERRIES

| <i>Variety</i> | <i>Comments</i> |
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| <u>Thornless (trailing)^a</u> | |
| Hull | Very vigorous, semi-erect canes. Large, sweet, firm fruit has excellent flavor. |
| Dirksen | Vigorous, productive and erect canes. Large, high quality fruit. Not as cold-hardy as other varieties. |
| Chester | Similar to Hull but ripens 10 days later. Very cold-hardy, productive canes with large, sweet fruit. |

^a May not be suitable for colder portions of Western Maryland.

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| <u>Thornless (erect)^a</u> | |
| Navaho | Medium size berries with very good sweet flavor. |
| Arapaho | Medium size berries, ripens 10 days earlier than ‘Navaho’ |
| Apache | Larger fruit than ‘Arapaho’ or ‘Navaho’. |

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|----------------------------------|---|
| <u>Thorny^a</u> | |
| Darrow | Tall, vigorous plants with erect canes. Good winter-hardiness. Firm, medium berries with good, sub-acid flavor. |
| Cherokee | Erect and productive cultivar with medium size fruit. |
| Shawnee | Late, productive plants that are very cold-hardy. Large and flavorful fruit. |

^a More cold-hardy and sweeter than thornless types. Thornless varieties tend to be more productive, however.

TABLE and JUICE GRAPES

| <i>Variety</i> | <i>Comments</i> |
|------------------------|--|
| <u>Seedless</u> | |
| Canadice | Small to medium size, early red grape with excellent grape flavor. Keeps long on the vine. Reliable and productive with some black rot resistance. |
| Himrod | Golden yellow fruit with fine flavor that keeps well. Very cold-hardy; moderate disease resistance. |
| Mars | Very hardy, productive and dependable. Large, blue fruit that ripens mid-season. |
| Reliance | Dependable, early season variety; very hardy vines. Large, high quality, red fruit will store for 3 months. |
| Vanessa | Red, medium size fruit ripens mid-season. |
| <u>Seeded</u> | |
| Concord | The standard table grape; was introduced in 1843. Large, blue-black grapes. Vigorous and productive vines are black rot susceptible. |
| Niagra | A white Concord. Large, attractive fruit makes excellent juice. Very cold-hardy. |
| Buffalo | Similar to Concord but ripens earlier and has some disease resistance. Vigorous vines; heavy bearer. |
| Steuben | Late, very large, blue fruit. Distinctive spicy flavor. Hardy and vigorous with some disease resistance. Ripens before Concord. |
| Alden | Very large, “meaty”, blue-black fruit. Very vigorous vines, require close pruning. Ripens before Concord. |

HIGH BUSH BLUEBERRIES^a

| <i>Variety^a</i> | <i>Comments</i> |
|----------------------------|--|
| Duke | Medium size fruits; vigorous plants. Good early season cultivar. |
| Bluetta | Short, compact, medium vigorous bushes. Medium size, crack-resistant fruit with good flavor. |
| Bluejay | Very vigorous bushes with mummy berry disease resistance. Large, firm, slightly tart berries. Fruit doesn't drop or crack. |
| Blueray | Very productive and vigorous variety that performs well in hot climates. Large, high quality berries. |
| Bluecrop | Leading variety; hardy and consistent with vigorous, upright canes. Fruit is large, firm and crack-resistant. |
| Coville | Large, crack-resistant fruit holds well on canes. Very productive and upright canes. |
| Late Blue | Small, firm, flavorful fruit borne on erect, vigorous vines. |
| Elliott | Very late, ornamental bush with red wood. Small to medium size fruit does not crack or drop. |

^a Listed in order of ripening

MAIL ORDER SOURCES FOR SMALL FRUIT PLANTS

Allen Plant Co.

P.O. Box 310

Fruitland, MD 21826-0310

Phone: 410-742-7122 Fax: 410-742-7120

www.imox.com/allenplant Email: rallen9084@aol.com

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Phone: 800-295-2226 Fax: 812-683-2004

www.inberry.com Email: berryinfo@inberry.com

Strawberries and brambles, currents, and gooseberries, grapes, blueberries, cranberries. University of Maryland recommended varieties; bare-root and container. Free catalog.

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www.alcasoft.com/pense Email: pense62@earthlink.net

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