

The Herb Society of America

Essential Guide to *Rubus*



Table of Contents

From the Bramble Patch	2
The Brambles: Sorting through the Thicket of <i>Rubus</i> Terminology	3
General Culture	10
Cultivars of Note	12
<i>Rubus</i> as Metaphor: The Bramble Bush and the Law	16
On a Roll with Raspberries (With Recipes)	18
The Traditional Bramble (With Recipes)	21
Blackberry Leaf Tea	24
The Literary <i>Rubus</i>	25
Sources	28

The Herb Society of America, Inc. is dedicated to promoting the knowledge, use, and delight of herbs through educational programs, research, and sharing the experience of its members with the community.

Environment Statement

The Society is committed to protecting our global environment for the health and well-being of humankind and all growing things. We encourage gardeners to practice environmentally sound horticulture.

Medical Disclaimer

It is the policy of The Herb Society of America not to advise or recommend herbs for medicinal or health use. This information is intended for educational purposes only and should not be considered as a recommendation or an endorsement of any particular medical or health treatment. Please consult a health care provider before pursuing any herbal treatments.

Information is provided as an educational service. Mention of commercial products does not indicate an endorsement by The Herb Society of America.



Ghost bramble

Photo courtesy of robsplants.com

Notes from the Bramble Patch

From the blackberry tangled verges along country lanes to the new smaller, thornless raspberries being bred for today's gardeners, the genus *Rubus* is a diverse one – feeding us and ornamenting our gardens and providing food and protective cover for wildlife and pollinators alike. From a rare bramble species on the Isle of Sicily to the west coast native Salmonberry – pioneer of stripped logging sites – the species within the genus number into the hundreds. Although writing about another genus altogether, plant hunter Reginald Farrer's description as 'entangled, confused, and difficult to decipher... all differentiable, but not always easy to differentiate' (*Rainbow Bridge*, 1921) could apply equally to *Rubus*. In all that complexity, an abundance of uses and a wealth of delights await us in *Rubus*, Herb of the Year™ 2020. The Herb of the Year™ Essential Facts Committee has compiled a selection of articles relating to *Rubus* for the use and delight of our members. Please enjoy the following guide in your programs and study groups.

Bobbie Cyphers

Herb of the Year™ Essential Facts Committee

Bobbie Cyphers, Chair; Susan Belsinger; Kathleen Hale; Pat Kenny; Karen O'Brien; Carolee Snyder; Rie Sluder

Cover: *Wineberries in various stages of ripening, photo by Susan Belsinger*

The Brambles:

Sorting through the Thicket of *Rubus* Terminology

By Susan Belsinger & Pat Kenny

In delving deeper into this subject, we have found that there are many botanical terms that we felt necessary to better define—so that is our task here—with Pat’s detailed illustrations and our joint *Rubus* research. Our subject, *Rubus* spp., members of the Rosaceae, are a prickly bunch commonly referred to as brambles or brambleberries, and sometimes caneberries.

According to <https://www.britannica.com/plant/bramble>: “*Bramble, (genus Rubus), large genus of flowering plants in the rose family (Rosaceae), consisting of usually prickly shrubs. Brambles occur naturally throughout the world, especially in temperate areas, and a number are invasive species outside their native range. Many are widely cultivated for their fruits, including raspberries, blackberries, and hybrids such as loganberries and boysenberries.*”

Although some species are herbaceous, most of these shrubs have erect, canelike stems, which are somewhat woody, with prickles, bristles, and gland-tipped hairs, although some are hybridized to get rid of the prickles and bristles and are sold as thornless. In the wild, the canes of *Rubus* bend and arc, while cultivated canes are commonly grown with supports, such as wires or a trellis.

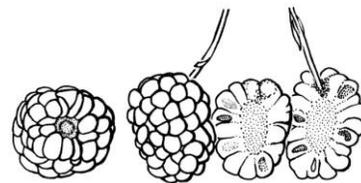
While some species have simple leaves, other species have the familiar characteristics of alternate compound leaves, 3-to 7-leaflets, and often stipules. The five-petaled flowers (look similar to a wild rose) are most often white, though some are pale pink, and sometimes an even darker shade of pink. These blooms have many stamens attached to a calyx; sepals of the blackberry group fold down, whereas those of the raspberry stretch out. Eventually flowers develop into berries, which are technically an aggregate of drupelets.

Rubus befuddles most botanists because it hybridizes so easily, resulting in a large and diverse genus with 250 to 700 species; it often makes identification challenging. Many species reproduce vegetatively by tip-rooting; some propagate by suckering from stolon runners or rhizomes.

How do you tell a raspberry from a blackberry?



Raspberry, hollow, receptacle left on plant



Blackberry, retains receptacle

There are a few different ways (fruit, leaf, and cane) to identify the difference between raspberries (*Rubus idaeus* L.) and blackberries (*Rubus fruticosus* L.), however the easiest and most obvious way is how the berries come off of the plant. When raspberries, as well as black

raspberries (*R. occidentalis*) and wineberries (*R. phoenicolasius*), are picked, their stems and receptacles stay on the plant and the berries are hollow. Blackberries keep their stems when picked and the berries have a center receptacle, so they are not hollow.

A few other differentiations are that blackberries grow much taller than raspberries—they can reach up to 10 feet in height—raspberries grow about 4 to 6 feet tall. Blackberries have thicker stems and prickles and raspberries have thinner stems and prickles with black raspberries in the middle-size range.

The foliage is also an identifier: blackberry leaves are green on both sides, while the green leaves of raspberry and black raspberry have whitish undersides.

Generally, black raspberries ripen first in early summer, followed by raspberries in mid-summer and the blackberries are last to bear fruit in late summer.

What is the difference between thorns, spines, and prickles?

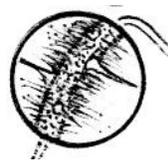
People are often surprised to find that those really aren't thorns on those brambles--rose bushes, raspberries, and blackberries; those sharp points that prick you are prickles. Here's a fairly simple definition from <http://www.differencebetween.info/> in an article titled "Difference between Thorns, Spines, and Prickles": *"Key Difference: In plant morphology, thorns, spines and prickles are all similar type of structures identified by their sharp and stiff ends. Thorns are obtained from shoots. Spines are obtained from leaves and prickles are derived from the epidermis. They all are related to anti-herbivore defense mechanisms of plants."*

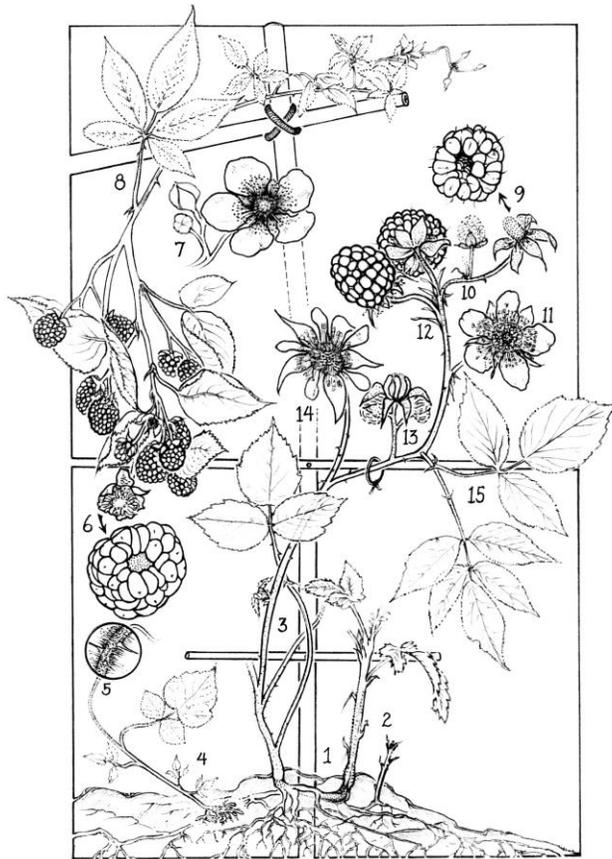
"... One must not consider thorns, spines and prickles to be the same thing. Thorns are modified branches or stems. Spines are modified leaves and prickles are simply extension of the plant cortex and epidermis. Unlike spines, thorns are deeply seated and have connection with vascular tissues. Thorns are formed from deeply seated tissues of the plant. On the other hand, spines are formed from tissues present externally."

Here are a few more points that we found useful in defining the difference between thorns and prickles, published by Indiana Public Media, Moments of Science Staff: *"Thorns, like those found on the Hawthorn tree, are modified branches that project from the stem and branches of a woody plant. They are very sharp, and quite strong as they are made of the same stuff as the stem of the tree or bush. Thorns are deeply embedded in the woody structure of the plant, and can't be broken off easily. Those nasty points on the stem of the rose are not, in fact, true thorns, but are what scientists call prickles."*

Prickles are small, sharp outgrowths of the plant's outer layers, or skin-like epidermis, and the sub-epidermal layer just beneath it. Unlike a thorn, a prickle can be easily broken off the plant because it is really a feature of the outer layers rather than part of the wood, like a thorn." <https://indianapublicmedia.org/amomentofscience/a-rose-by-any-other-name/> (good photo comparisons). Somehow the old saying "a rose between two thorns" just doesn't sound quite as emphatic as "a rose between two prickles".

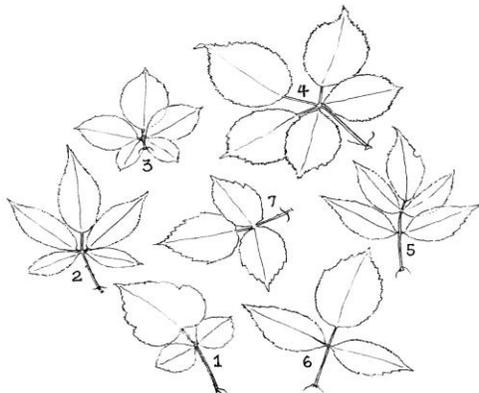
Close-up of prickles and glandular hairs





Composite Schematic Drawing of *Rubus* spp.

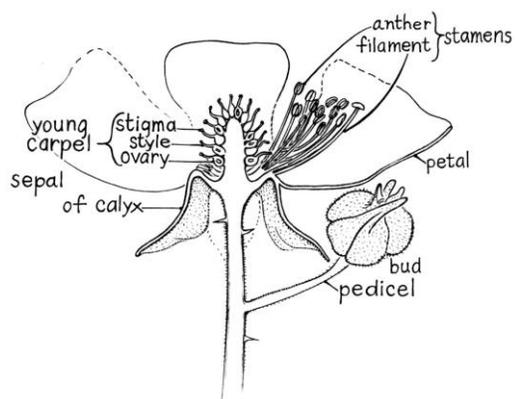
1. Shoot development from root buds in the crown
2. Primocanes
3. Floricanes
4. Typical tip-rooting; here is the aggressive wineberry.
5. Enlargement of typical wineberry stem showing prickles and bristles; we added gland-tipped hairs which may be found on young calyces of buds.
6. Blackberry comes off pedicel containing receptacle; see remains of stamens and calyx.
7. Typical rendition of blackberry flower
8. Typical blackberry leaf, *Rubus fruticosus*
9. Raspberry comes off leaving receptacle, "knob" on pedicel.
10. Young fruit
11. Typical raspberry flower
12. Peduncle of a cluster of *Rubus* fruits
13. Young black raspberry cluster of buds
14. Typical black raspberry flower and leaf
15. Typical raspberry leaves



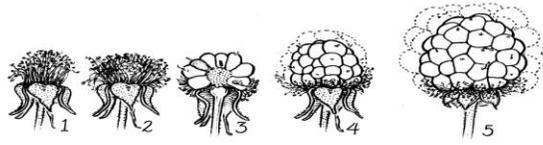
Different *Rubus* Leaves

(Clockwise order– note stipules on petiole ends)

1. *Rubus phoenicolasius* Wineberry
2. *R. fruticosus* Blackberry
3. *R. fruticosus* 'Baby Cakes'
4. *R. fruticosus* 'Chester', said to be "thornless" (smooth stems, no emergences)
5. *R. idaeus* 'Carolina Red' raspberry
6. *R. idaeus* 'Carolina Red' raspberry
7. *R. occidentalis* Black raspberry



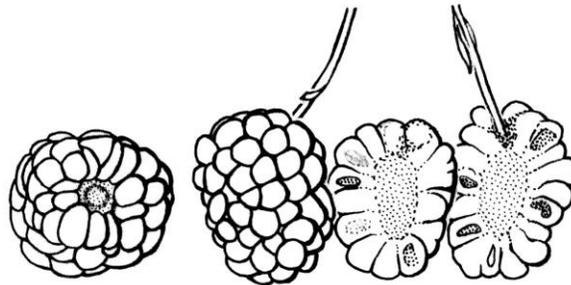
Detailed Flower Parts



Blackberry Development Sequence

(Inspired by photographs on pages 40 to 41 in *The Visual Dictionary of Plants*)

1. Fertilization has taken place; petals fall off.
2. Ovaries begin to swell; stamens wither and die.
3. Longitudinal section shows carpels or pericarps are forming (exocarp = skin, mesocarp = flesh, endocarp = a hard, inner layer, note achenes within).
4. Carpels mature into drupelets (small fleshy fruits with single seeds surrounded by hard endocarp) then mesocarp of drupelet becomes larger, darker, and sweeter (dotted line).
5. Note remains of styles of ovaries and remains of stamens in fully ripened aggregate of drupelets (dotted line) which become even larger.



Whole ripe blackberry off calyx and unripe blackberry longitudinally cut through, still on pedicel. Note dotted receptacle and different visuals of seeds (achenes), some not viable.

Glossary

Anther—the expanded, apical (apical means located at the tip or apex) part of the stamen, which contains the pollen, usually found in the center of a bloom.

Bramble—a shrub or vine of the rose family that has prickly canes or stems; an English term often used to describe plants of the genus *Rubus*, such as raspberries and blackberries.

Bristle—a sharp and short stiff hair or hair-like structure on a plant.

Calyx—the outer whorl surrounding the perianth of a flower, it envelops the base of a flower, which includes all of the sepals.

Cane—long and slender woody stem that is not very rigid of blackberries or raspberries.

Compound leaf—a leaf composed of several leaflets.

Drupe—a fleshy fruit usually having a single, hard, nutlike seed, like a cherry, olive or peach.

Drupelet—a small drupe, one small segment in an aggregate fruit like raspberries or blackberries, each tiny drupelet or drupel contains a seed surrounded by flesh.

Emergence—standing out or rising from.

Filament—the threadlike stalk of a stamen which bears the anther

Floricane—Second-year cane of *Rubus* which flowers and fruits

Glandular hair—a thin, hair-like protuberance bearing or resembling glands, which may secrete a substance, usually sticky or oily

Leaflet—a small leaf, or one of the divisions of a compound leaf

Lobed—having a lobe or lobes (a segment or separation up to halfway to the center of a leaf)

Ovary—the enlarged, usually basal part of the pistil, which contains the ovules (immature seed) that eventually become the fruit.

Petiole—the stalk that attaches the leaf to the stem; petiolate means having a petiole

Pistil—the female reproductive organ of a flower; usually has three parts: ovary, style, and stigma. Pistillate refers to having a pistil or having a pistil with non-functioning stamens.

Prickle—a small, sharp spine-like point or outgrowth coming from the epidermis or bark of a plant, not from the wood; also referred to as an emergence. Prickles can occur on leaf veins, margins or bracts and even on fruits.

Primocane—First-year cane of *Rubus* which usually does not flower

Receptacle—the expanded portion of the stem of a flower upon which the reproductive parts are borne.

Simple leaf—a singular leaf.

Spine—a sharp-pointed outgrowth of a stem (like on a hawthorn tree); it is a modified leaf or stipule (one of a pair of leaf-like lateral appendages at the base of a petiole)

Stamen—the pollen-bearing, male reproductive organ of a flower having two parts: filament and anther.

Stigma—the part of the pistil of a flower, which is receptive to the pollen and from whence it germinates, most often located on the tip of the ovary or style.

Stipule—one of a pair of leaf-like lateral appendages at the base of a petiole

Style—most often, the narrowest part of the pistil which connects the ovary to the stigma

Toothed—having leaf margins that are serrated; not smooth

Thorn—a rigid, sharp, pointed, modified stem which is projected from the stems or branches of woody plants; it can be identified because it is subtended by a leaf

Sources for Research and Drawings

Applequist, Wendy, illustrated by Barbara Alongi. *The Identification of Medicinal Plants – A Handbook of the Morphology of Medicinal Botanicals in Commerce*. 2006. St. Louis, Missouri: Missouri Botanical Garden Press in collaboration with American Botanical Council, Austin, Texas.

Bell, Adrian D., illustrated by Alan Bryan. *Plant Forms – An Illustrated Guide to Flowering Plant Morphology*. 1991. Oxford: Oxford Press.

Dowden, Anne Ophelia, illustrated by the Author. *From Flower to Fruit*. 1984. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell.

Elpel, Thomas J., illustrated by the Author. *Botany In A Day – The Patterns Method of Plant Identification –An Herbal Field Guide to Plant Families of North America*. 2013. Pony, Montana: HOPS Press.

Falconi, Dina, illustrated by Wendy Hollender. *Foraging and Feasting –A Field Guide and Wild Foods Cookbook*. 2013. Accord, New York: Botanical Arts Press, LLC.

Harris, James G. & Melinda Woolf Harris, illustrated by the Authors. *Plant Identification Terminology – An Illustrated Glossary*. 1994. Spring Lake, Utah: Spring Lake Publishing.

Hill, Lewis and Leonard Perry. *The Fruit Gardener's Bible*. 2011. North Adams, Massachusetts: Storey Publishing.

Holmes, Roger, Ed. *Taylor's Guide to Fruits and Berries*. 1996. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.

Lindsay, Mary, Project Editor & Chez Pichall, Art Director. *The Visual Dictionary of Plants – An Eyewitness Dictionary*. 1992. New York: Dorling Kindersley.

Lura, Stefan B. Staff botanist for the U.S. National Arboretum, Washington, D.C. gave essential help with the technical details in writings and drawings.

Philip Lief Group, Inc. *National Gardening Association Dictionary of Horticulture*. 1994. New York: Penguin Books.

Zomlefer, Wendy B., illustrated by the Author. *Guide to Flowering Plant Families*. 1994. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

WIKIpedia - photographic image sites of various members of the *Rubus* genus.

<https://www.britannica.com/plant/bramble>

<https://catalog.extension.oregonstate.edu/ec1303/html>

<http://www.cobalt-group.com/frontpagewebs/Content/Classify/classifi.htm>

<http://www.differencebetween.info/difference-between-thorns-spines-and-prickles>

<https://indianapublicmedia.org/amomentofscience/a-rose-by-any-other-name/>

<https://infinitespider.com/wineberry-the-edible-invasive/>

<https://luv2garden.com/raspberries.html>

<https://natureupnorth.org/justmynature/justindalaba/brambleberries-whats-difference>

<https://www.quora.com/What-are-the-little-hairs-on-strawberries>

<https://www.slideshare.net/zssi/fruits-development>

About the Authors

Retired medical illustrator **Pat Kenny** turns from drawing the innards of *Homo sapiens* to those of plants. Not an artist but a graphic technician with a small knowledge of how to see-hand-draw in the garden and look stuff up in books and on the Internet, she tries to copy enough of a plant to further her understanding, and perhaps help others to do the same.

Susan Belsinger looks forward to each new herb of the year and getting to know them intimately. She enjoys immersing herself in cultivating, researching, photographing—and creating delicious dishes to eat, beverages to imbibe, and condiments for the pantry—as well as every other aspect, be they for health and well-being, spa herbs or getting crafty. The best part is sharing the experiences and knowledge with other like-minded people. www.susanbelsinger.com

General Culture

By Bobbie Cyphers

Being such a vast and complex genus, the cultural requirements for *Rubus* vary greatly as to soil type – from sandy to clay loams with good drainage, full sun to shady woodland, and PH from 5 to 7. Depending upon each species' region of origin, their water needs run from the standard one-inch per week to intermittent irrigation depending upon the season. For example, raspberries establish a shallower root system than do blackberries making them less drought tolerant. The native habitat of each individual species is the best indicator of its needs.

Brambles should not be planted where members of the *Solanaceae* family – peppers, tomatoes, potatoes, and eggplants – have been planted within the past seven years to avoid the spread of disease.

Cultivation of Blackberries, *R. fruticosus* (species aggregate) and raspberries, *R. idaeus* and *R. occidentalis*, and other edible species and sub-species.

The only way to eat a truly delicious blackberry or raspberry is to either grow it or find a wild patch. Their succulent softness, especially so with raspberries, make them poor shippers and poor supermarket produce – compared to the real thing. Fortunately, growing them is not complicated. Plant them in full sun in well-drained organic rich soil and provide good sanitation. Irrigate during periods of little rainfall, remembering the requirement of an inch of water each week during the growing season. Select a variety based upon your climate zone and gardening space. It's recommended that domestic cultivars not be planted within 600 feet of wild growing brambles.

Plant caneberries in spring after the danger of a severe frost is past. For the best information on when to plant in your area, contact your local county extension service or a reputable nursery. Setting the plants at the same depth they were grown, firm the soil around the roots and water thoroughly. Fertilize subsequent springs with a combination of blood meal, bonemeal and fishmeal, or similar organic fertilizer. Leaner (not over fed) soils produce sweeter berries.

Because red raspberries sucker from the roots, it's customary to grow them in hedgerows, as do most commercial growers. Good spacing is anywhere from two to three feet apart based upon where you garden. Distance between rows is, usually, eight to twelve feet. Blackberries and blackcaps (black raspberries) sucker only from the crown and would need closer spacing to form a hedge. Mulch or, better yet, plant a cover crop to keep down weeds. And to avoid the disease and insect problems associated with a monoculture, plant fragrant herbs and glorious flowers along the rows and hedges.

Emulating Nature

Across the country road separating our old farm from our neighbors, a thicket of wild blackberries nudges the gravel. From an open window I can smell the blossoms of the honeysuckle I pull up, cut back every year to free my space at the berry banquet table. Up close, I can see our own native invasives, poison ivy and virgin's bower, fighting it out with the interloper honeysuckle. I share this bounty of fruit and thicket with the Carolina wrens, Eastern towhees, finches, and a breathtaking indigo bunting, and honey bees, bumble bees, flies, lady bugs, praying mantis, mice, and bunnies. The patch of blackberries survives on what rainfall our

chaotic weather offers, some years thriving, others less so. Fed on a diet of half a century of decomposing leaf fall and shedding vegetation, the soil beneath the brambles is deep and rich and crumbly. The pines and cedars are beginning to overshadow the edges of the blackberry thicket, grown tall since the field was clear-cut fifty years ago. Sparser in the shade, the berries are still ambrosial sweet, though small. Growing through, over, under, and around the blackberries are Joe Pye weed, *Vernonia*, homesteading jonquils, native *Penstemons*, mosses, and ferns – all members of this diverse community on the side of the road. We'll go out this winter and cut the canes back some from the road. Otherwise someone might complain, and the crews will be out from the county, spraying with their herbicides.

Lessons to be learned?

1. Provide a site with enough sunshine for the plant's needs.
2. Compost on a regular basis.
3. Mulch to retain moisture in the dry seasons.
4. Biodiversity, biodiversity, biodiversity in flora and fauna.
5. Herbicides destroy habitats (homes) and pesticides damage communities. These quick fixes seldom last, but the resulting havoc they wreak, most certainly, does.
6. Balance in nature, on our farms, and in our gardens takes time, patience, and the ability to embrace imperfection.
7. There will be good years, and not so good years.

Propagation

Pencil-sized root cuttings from 4 to 6 inches long can be planted 2 to 3 inches deep, either directly in the ground, or in pots or flats of soil mix and perlite in a controlled environment, then lifted or dug and planted in their chosen site at the proper time.

Tip layering is perhaps one of the easiest methods for propagating caneberries, especially those with trailing stems. In late summer, shoot tips are buried in shallow trenches. The following spring, the new plants can be separated from the parent, dug, and transplanted.

Semi-hardwood stem cuttings can be rooted using either a mist or a capillary system. Cuttings are placed in containers of perlite only, or mixed with a small amount of potting soil.

Suckering canes can be divided from the parent and transplanted in either fall or spring, depending upon your location.

Pruning

Plants have existed in the wild for millennia without once being pruned, except by the wind, a passing tiger or two, or old age. In cultivation plants are pruned to help maintain the health of the plants in our care by removing dead and diseased wood. By thinning within a plant – removing excess or congested growth – we increase air circulation and light infiltration, thereby improving plant health as well as increasing fruit yield and quality.

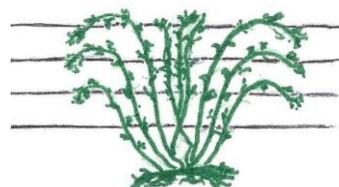
Raspberries Throughout summer, any new suckering growth is pruned to retain the best four or five canes of each plant; and the previous year's fruiting canes are removed each spring before bud break.

Blackberries When the plants reach the desired height – four to five feet – tip prune to encourage new lateral growth for fruiting the following year. Remove all fruiting canes immediately after harvest. In early spring thin the remaining canes, retaining five to seven of the most vigorous.

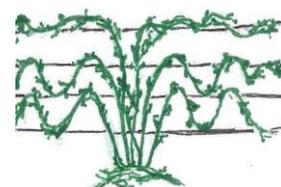
Always clean and remove all pruned canes and debris from around the plants as soon as the work is finished.

Training Methods for Cane Fruits

For cultivars with more rigid canes, fan out and tie to the wires. New growth can be tied in to the center, lowered to position when the fruited canes have been harvested.



For vigorous varieties with pliable canes, weave the canes on the lower wires, new growth up the center and onto the top wire. Lower when the old canes have been pruned away.



About the Author

Bobbie Cyphers—writer, gardener, naturalist, and former nursery professional—studies the natural world from her *Garden in a Wood*, www.bobbiecyphers.com.

Cultivars of Note

By Bobbie Cyphers

Blackberries - Species aggregate *Rubus fruticosus*

Thorny:

‘Prime-Ark 45™’

Released by the University of Arkansas, this blackberry fruits on current season canes (primocane) and second season canes (floricane). Erect canes should not need trellising. The medium to large berries stay firm over an extended period. Flavor rating - Very Good. Grows well in zones 4-9.

‘Shawnee’ (Plant Patent #5686)

Heavy producer over several weeks, berries are sweet and juicy. No trellising required. Flavor rating – Very Good. Reliable in zones 6-9.

Thornless:

‘Apache’ (Patented)

Another release from Arkansas, ‘Apache’ produces large berries and high yields. Conical-shaped, black, glossy fruits. Because of its erect canes it can be grown without a trellis if tip pruned to encourage lateral growth. Flavor rating – excellent. Suited to zones 6-10.

‘Chester’

One of the more productive of the winter hardy thornless varieties, it bears large fruit that ripens toward the end of summer. Even in hot weather it doesn’t lose its shine or soften. Resistant to cane blight. Zones 5-9.

‘Natchez’

An early ripened, this large fruited variety was a 2013 Texas Superstar Selection. Semi-erect canes should be trellised. Disease resistant with a Flavor rating of Excellent. Zones 6-12.

‘Triple Crown’

A newer release from the Agricultural Research Service Fruit Laboratory in Beltsville, MD. It was named ‘Triple Crown’ for its three crowning attributes-flavor, productivity, and vigor. Should be trellised. Berries are large with a Flavor rating of Excellent. Zones 5-12.

Raspberries – *Rubus idaeus* (red), *Rubus occidentalis* (black and yellow)

Summer Bearing:

‘Boyne’

A good producer of deep red, medium-size fruit. Good flavor. Hardy in zones 3-8.

‘Cascade Delight’

A heavy yielder and root rot disease resistant, this variety performs well on wetter sites. Large, firm berries have an intense, traditional raspberry flavor. Hardy in zones 6-9.

‘Raspberry Shortcake’

Great for containers gardening, and it’s mounding and thornless. The light red berries taste deliciously sweet with just a hint of vanilla. Self-pollinating. Hardy in zones 5-8.

Everbearing:

‘Anne’ Plants bear the first year, yielding golden-colored fruits tasting a bit like apricots. Used for tarts, jams, and salads, the large berries freeze well. Floricanes produce berries July and into August, while the primocanes start fruiting in September and go on until frost. Self-pollinating. Zones 4-9.

‘Dorman Red’

A good raspberry for the Deep South, it crops well, bearing quantities of juicy red fruit. Good fresh or frozen. Disease resistant. Ripens in June. Hardy in zones 5-9.

Ornamental *Rubus*

In his book, *Gardening with Groundcovers and Vines*, the late Allen Lacy, philosopher and writer of eloquent prose, dedicated a section to “The Little Bramble Cousins.” For three pages, he

walks us through the late great Heronswood Nursery, introduces us to gardening icon Dan Hinkley and shares with us his first encounter with *Rubus calycinooides*, whose grace note was not an edible berry, but a quiet beauty. At the time only one of the 45 species grown in Hinkley's garden, this small creeping bramble started Allen Lacy's love affair with the genus.

Other writers, other gardeners and designers, speak of the ghost bramble, the sacred bramble, the cloudberry, the thimbleberry, the salmonberry, the bamboo bramble, and wonder that they're so little used in our gardens. Most are easily grown, displaying vibrant autumn coloring, delicate flowers, and unique berries loved by native birds and wild creatures. They have a presence in the garden as lovely as their cousin the rose.

Shrubs



Rubus thibetanus



Photos courtesy of robsplants.com

The Ghost Bramble, is an apt name to describe both *Rubus cockburnianus* and *R. thibetanus*. Covered with a powdery white coating over its burgundy infused canes, it appears other-worldly in the low light of a winter's day. Easy to grow, it prefers a site with six to eight hours of sun and free-draining, loamy soil. It's hardy in zones 5-9a.

Cultivars

R. thibetanus 'Silver Fern' flushes in spring with silvery gray, fern-like leaves on the arching canes, growing from six to eight feet tall. Flowers are a pale purple. Pollard yearly for the best winter display of ghostly canes. In the garden it layers beautifully with the smoke tree, *Cotinus coggygria* 'Royal Purple' and the holly, *Ilex* x 'Nellie R. Stevens.'

R. cockburnianus 'Razzle Dazzle' displays leaves mottled with pinks, creams, and golds with flowers a rosy-purple. Slower growing than the species, it reaches three feet tall and five feet wide. Stunning coupled with *Cedrus deodara* 'Devinely Blue.'

Other Species and their Cultivars

***R. parviflorus* 'Flore Pleno'** is a variety of the thimbleberry, native to western North America and much of the northern tier of the United States. It has showy, double, white flowers. The leaves are large and similar in shape to a maple and has no prickles. Hardy to zone 3a. Prefers intermittent watering.

***R. spectabilis* 'Flore Pleno'** is another North American native. This salmonberry's blooms are the color of magenta washed in indigo – vibrant and showy. A seven-foot tall shrub with bright

green canes, its young growth is prickly, but mature canes have few spines. Hardy to zone 6a. Intermittent water needs.

R. lineatus boasts large lobed and quilted leaves. A clumper rather than a viner, it can grow to eight feet. Canes are thornless and branched, arching slightly. Quite architectural with small white flowers in spring. Likes a sun to part sun exposure. Hardy to zone 6. Prefers moist well-draining soils.

***R. microphyllus* 'Variegatus'** forms a very dense two-foot mound of prickly stems bearing lovely green leaves splashed pink and white. Hardy in zones 5-7.

R. odoratus, noted for its lovely purple flowers throughout the summer, completes its show come fall with its maple-like leaves displaying colors ranging from rose to merlot. Growing four to six feet tall and twice as wide, in sun or part-shade, it does well in average, well-draining soil. Hardy in zones 3-8.



R. odoratus, Photo by Karen O'Brien

Ground Covers

***R. pentalobus* (aka *R. claycinoides* and *R. hayata-koidzumii*)**, 'Sonya's Parasol' from Taiwan has evergreen leaves swirled in shades of pink and cream. It grows well in either full sun or part shade. Cold hardy to zone 6. It would look lovely carpeting the ground beneath antique roses.

***R. pentalobus* 'Emerald Carpet'** has thick, textured evergreen leaves that turn a vibrant raspberry color in autumn. Non-invasive, it forms a dense mat six to eight inches tall, three to five feet wide. Excellent in the woodland garden, spreading around rocks and creeping into crevices. Hardy in zones 6a-10b.

***R. irenaeus*, the Persian Bramble**, is another evergreen creeping groundcover with rounded, glossy leaves as much as six inches across. Can grow in full sun to full shade with small white flowers followed by reddish orange fruits. Beloved by birds, butterflies, and bees. Hardy to zone 6a.

***R. arcticus* spp. x *arcticus* 'Linda'**. This cultivar of the northwestern North American native thimbleberry grows to eight inches tall and boasts bright pink flowers. Does best in humus-rich soil in either sun or part shade. Pollinator friendly. Hardy in zones 2-7.

***R. fockeanus* MD97118**, a selection by Far Reaches Farm from the forest of Yunaan province in China, this woodland groundcover spreads slowly with lovely textured leaves, small white flowers and pale orange fruit. Garden idea: Primroses floating above a sea of this variety. Hardy to zone 7a.



Courtesy of FarReaches Farm

***R. parviflorus* 'Sunshine Spreader'** makes a carpet of a golden lime green in half shade or sun. Hardiness zone thought to be 5 to 9.

Scrambler

Rubus henryi* var. *bambusarum is a vigorous, rambling evergreen with trifoliate bamboo-looking foliage and prickly stems. In summer, its pink flowers open in slender panicles. If

supported it can grow to 16 feet. As with most brambles, prune after fruiting. Does well in sun or part shade and is hardy to zone 6. Native to China.

Other Lesser Known Species

R. argutus, also known as highbush blackberry, is native to the eastern regions of the United States, as far north as Massachusetts and south to Georgia. Its leaves differ on its primocanes in having five leaflets from those on the second year, flowering canes that have only three. Hardy in zones 5-9.

R. pedatus, the salmonberry, native from California to Alaska and east to Alberta and Idaho, the red dewberry is a naturalizing creeper, covering old fields and ditch banks. Hardy in zones 4-8.

R. chamaemorus, known as the cloudberry, grows in bogs and marshy areas throughout the northern hemisphere. Bearing amber-colored edible berries, it is sometimes referred to as the baked apple berry for its sweet and tart flavor. High in vitamin C, the berries are used in jams and desserts, and in Canada as a flavor additive to beer. A slow grower it has leaves of five to seven lobes and white flowers. Hardy in zones 1b-6.

R. glaucus, known as *mora de astilla* or the Andean raspberry, prefers the cooler cloud forests of its native regions of Central and South America. It is now shipped to the United States where, among other uses, its dried berries are used to flavor black teas. Hardy in zones 3-8.

R. sanctus, the holy bramble native to the eastern Mediterranean, grows along field edges and across areas of wasteland. With a contrasting, near burgundy boss, the flowers are a pale pink shading to a darker pink. Garden idea: surrounding a holy well in a garden of sacred herbs. Hardy in zones 7a-11.

***Rubus* as Metaphor: The Bramble Bush and the Law**

By Kathleen M. Hale

Once, we are told, a man fell into a bramble bush. The consequences were terrible: he was blinded by the thorns. His eyes were destroyed. The remedy, we are further told, was to throw himself back into the thicket. The thorns reversed their own damage, and his vision was restored; in fact, his vision was enhanced.

This is one of the strangest stories about the bramble, and there are quite a few out there. The Cherokee tradition of the trickster rabbit became the African American tale of Bre'er Rabbit, who cunningly used reverse psychology on the fox who had captured him, convincing him to throw poor Bre'er Rabbit into the horrible Briar Patch, an unassailable fortress to rabbits. Other traditions helpfully explain why blackberries, or brambles, so useful in keeping away evil spirits and vampires in magical traditions, should not be eaten after some date or other in October (when, exactly, varies between stories), because witches pee on them, or fairies spit on them, or something. Anyway, they go bad – sooner, rather than later. See Seamus Heaney's poem, *Blackberry Picking*, for why, even in season, they will not keep.

*We hoarded the fresh berries in the byre,
But when the bath was filled we found the fur,
A rat-grey fungus, glutting our cache.
The juice was stinking, too. Once of the bush
The fruit was fermented, the sweet flesh would turn sour.
I always felt like crying. It wasn't fair
That all the lovely canfuls smelt of rot.
Each year I hoped they'd keep, knew they would not.*

---Seamus Heaney, "Blackberry Picking"
Opened Ground: Selected Poems 1966-1996

But back to that poor man who lost and then regained his sight. Whatever the point may have been of the original story (reputed to be Welsh), it has been translated into a famous metaphor for the Anglo-American legal system; or at least, to the pain of learning to be a lawyer. Years ago, when I was a brash and callow student of the law, there was a barbaric teaching practice called the "Socratic Method." Socrates would not have recognized it. The classical Socratic method was expounded by Plato in the second century BCE in his *Dialogues*. These *Dialogues* illustrated the method by which Socrates drew out a discussion about a complex philosophical point by inviting expressions of divergent points of view. The point of the Law School Socratic Method was to intimidate and terrorize the student through hostile grilling.

I can tell you from experience, unlike the original Athenian beneficiaries of the method, it was unwise to respond to a perplexing question, with "By the gods, Socrates, I cannot tell." It did not go well.

More than 70 years ago, Professor Karl Nickerson Llewellyn, of the Columbia University School of Law, gave a talk called, "The Bramble Bush." Today, it might have been a TED Talk. Llewellyn was closely associated with a theory of jurisprudence called "Legal Realism." This theory refuted the theory of "Legal Formalism." Put simply, he felt that the law was not, as a Formalist might hold, the letter of the law. It was how the law was used to achieve outcomes that a judge, for example, thought would bring about the fairest result. The formal law was invoked to shape an outcome that might well be based on personal bias.

To a non-lawyer, and to many lawyers, the overwhelming response to this hypothesis might be summarized as, "Duh!" But to someone of philosophical mind, engaging in questions like these is like...well, a rabbit enjoying the Briar Patch.

Professor Llewellyn is not, however, widely remembered today for his contributions to Legal Realism so much as for his description of law school as a Briar Patch. You'll put out an eye, or two, trying to learn your ways through the thicket of the Brooding Omnipresence of the Law. But, if you persevere, you will be rewarded by new vision. The brutality of the Socratic Method, and of Law School itself, will, in Professor Llewellyn's hypothesis, serve as bramble thorns, to scarify the worthy into enlightenment.

Students today are often assigned *The Bramble Bush* to read before they begin law school. It is a time honored method to suggest that they buckle up for a wild ride, and stop whining. Later on, they may learn more pragmatic things, like about witches peeing on the blackberries in October.

About the Author

Kathleen Hale is the current Chair of the Western Reserve Unit of The Herb Society of America. She lives in Bentleyville, Ohio with her mostly adult children, entirely too many rescue animals and two hives of bees, named Scotland and England.



Raspberry Flowers, Photo by Susan Belsinger

On a Roll with Raspberries

By Karen O'Brien

As a young girl, my dad would take me out for walks in the woods. Today, we would call it foraging, but then, it was simply a way to get me out of my mother's hair as she prepared our Sunday dinner. We inevitably found something to bring home that was edible. Mushrooms, hickory nuts, and wild fruits were often a result of our forays. Raspberries and blackberries could be found easily enough, though the blackberries had such thorns that I thought they were not really worth gathering. I never ate a cultivated raspberry until I was grown and living on my own, since dad always knew where to find the wild ones. And why buy when you could find them yourself?

I've always liked to experiment with using herbs and fruits together. So, it was not surprising that I used raspberries and herbs to make fruit vinegars, as well as some luscious libations using those wonderful wild raspberries.

Using vinegar as a vehicle to extract the essence from herbs is an ancient practice, but well-suited to our busy lives today. It is fairly simple to infuse vinegars with fresh herbs, spices, and

even fruit, taking only a few minutes of active time to create unique and flavorful gifts. A glass jar, vinegar, and your choice of herbs are the only items needed to begin.

There are many uses for vinegar, from using an herb-infused blend on your salad, to cleaning products, and even as a beauty product. Summer/early fall is a great time to make these vinegars, as it is the peak time for harvesting herbs. It also makes sense to let the sun work passively for you, and by placing your jars out in the sun, the essence of the herbs is extracted more readily. It is vitally important to use a good quality vinegar. Plain white vinegar is not the best choice, but can be used in a pinch. Better to choose white wine or champagne vinegar, or even the white balsamic. If you prefer apple cider vinegar, remember that many delicate herbs will not stand up to the strong flavor of that vinegar. Save that type of vinegar for very strong herbs and/or spices.

Procedure for Making an Herbal Vinegar

To prepare an herbal vinegar, use clean quart or gallon jars. Wide-mouth canning jars are best for this, but any large mouthed jar will do. Pack the herbs you wish to use (washed and dried) into the jar, putting in as much as you can fit. Pour the vinegar over the herbs, covering them. Put the lid on the jar but do not tighten all the way. If you use metal lids, you may want to cover the mouth of the jar with wax paper or plastic wrap, so the vinegar does not come in contact with the metal (it will corrode it). Set the jar in the sun for a couple of weeks. You may gently shake the jars to distribute the herbs, but it is not entirely necessary. Setting the jars out in your garden can be a visual delight, as they sparkle in the sun. After steeping, strain out the herbs and re-bottle. Use a coffee filter in a fine mesh strainer to get most of the plant material out. You can purchase lovely decorated bottles for your vinegars as they make wonderful gifts.

Use herb vinegar to make your own salad dressing by adding a good quality olive oil (ratio two parts oil to one part vinegar). Add a splash to soups or stews to add some flavor and zest. Spinach, kale, and other vegetables taste great with a little herbed vinegar sprinkled on them. Experiment with fruit salads, coleslaws, and more – you'll enjoy your creations.

Some good raspberry/herb mixes to use in vinegars:

Thai basil, sliced ginger, blackberries – spray on vegetables before roasting
Lavender and black raspberries – good choice for fruit salads
Mint and red raspberries – great on spinach salads

Roasted Summer Vegetables

Serves 3 to 4

3 to 4 yellow summer squash, cut into inch thick slices
One small red onion, cut into eighths
One large red pepper, cut into 1/2- by 2-inch pieces
Olive oil
Thai basil and blackberry vinegar

Place squash, red onion, and red pepper into roasting pan coated lightly with olive oil. Spray vegetables with vinegar until they are lightly covered. Roast at 350° F for about 30 to 40 minutes until vegetables are tender.

Herbal White Sangria

8 to 10 servings

3 cups mixed cut fruit, including raspberries, peaches, and honeydew melon
2/3 cups sugar
1.5 liters pinot grigio or other dry white wine
1/2 cup brandy
1 1/2 cups club soda
1/4 cup triple sec
Ice ring made with mint, lemon verbena leaves, and anise hyssop flowers*

Stir fruit and sugar into punch bowl and let stand 15 to 30 minutes. Place ice ring into bowl, stir in wine, brandy and triple sec. Add club soda or sparkling water.

*Ice Ring Instructions

Fill a bundt pan half way with water. Freeze until partially solid. Arrange mint and lemon verbena leaves, as well as anise hyssop flowers in the pan, then gently fill with water to just cover the herbs. Freeze again until solid. Borage, Johnny-jump-ups, or even small rose flowers can also be used.

Lavender Raspberry Lemonade

12 servings

1/2 cup lavender flowers (use food grade)
2 cups water
1/2 gallon lemonade
1 pint fresh raspberries, cleaned and dried

Boil the water and pour over the lavender flowers in a large glass measuring cup or bowl. Steep the flowers 15 minutes. Strain; and pour into the pre-made lemonade. Chill. When serving, add 4 to 5 raspberries to a glass; muddle them slightly, and pour in lemonade.

About the Author

Karen O'Brien's herbal business, "The Green Woman's Garden," www.greenwomansgarden.com is located in the town of Richmond, NH and she is now investigating the possibilities of gardening in the woods, as well as the fields. She hopes that any and all mistakes of gardening past will stay past, and anxiously anticipates new adventures in the hills of New Hampshire.

The Traditional Bramble

By Carolee Snyder

We know that blackberries (*Rubus fruticosus*) have been a part of man's diet since long ago. Scientists found the remains of blackberries in the stomach of a Stone Age man dug out of the heavy soil in eastern England, dating from Neolithic times. For centuries people have risked the scratches of their thorny stems to gather large, juicy blackberries. Common throughout Europe

and North America, it is a tough plant that can grow between the crevices of rocks and survive strong winds and periods of drought. There are many species, but all boast the pretty, five-petaled flowers, generally white or shaded a light rose. Quite robust, the blackberry plant grows quickly, the long canes bending over, rooting where they touch the ground. Without tending, a dense thicket can grow with tangled canes intertwining. In some regions blackberries were part of the living fence used to confine livestock.

In olden days, there were many beliefs in the medicinal and magical power of blackberries. It was thought that something that enduring, aggressive, rough, and thorny had to have powers. As outrageous as it sounds, some people believed that a person with boils or rheumatism would be cured by crawling through a briar patch of blackberries or raspberries. Some early physicians used the leaves of blackberries as a poultice for burns and swellings, and the young tips were boiled to treat sore throats.

As a tea the leaves of the *Rubus* plants have been used traditionally for a variety of medicinal purposes, and are still used today for treating gum diseases, diarrhea, and to help eliminate sinus congestion. The tea is also used externally for sunburn and rashes.

Blackberries are a delicious source of Vitamin C, which is beneficial for relieving cold symptoms and other minor infections. Blackberry syrup was made, not only for use in a variety of desserts, but to add to boiling water with a bit of lemon to warm one on a cold winter's night.

Recipes adapted from *Herbal Blessings* by Carolee Snyder

Blackberry and Sage Scones

8 to 12 scones

2 cups self-rising flour
3 tablespoons sugar
6 tablespoons cold butter, cut into pieces
1 cup whipping cream
1 cup blackberries (if frozen, drain well after thawing)

Place a layer of parchment paper on a baking sheet. Preheat oven to 425° F.

Mix the flour and sugar together in large bowl. Cut the butter into the flour until it resembles corn meal. Add whipping cream, mixing just until blended. Add blackberries and mix lightly, do not over mix.

Dough may be sticky. Pour onto center of parchment paper. With floured hands, pat dough into a circle about 10-inches in diameter and 1-inch thick. Sprinkle top liberally with sugar. Cut into 8 to 12 pie-shaped pieces, but do not separate.

Bake 12 to 15 minutes, until lightly browned and a skewer inserted into the center comes clean. Serve plain, with butter, or with clotted cream and blackberry jam.

Blackberry Margarita

Makes 2 servings

1/2 cup blackberries
1 tablespoon water
Juice of 1 lime
2 tablespoons triple sec or other orange liqueur
Tiny pinch salt
Pinch sugar
3 to 4 tablespoons tequila
1 1/2 cups ice cubes
Fresh berry garnish

In a small food processor, puree blackberries with water. Pour into a sieve to strain out seeds. Place 2 tablespoons of the berry puree in a jar, shaker, or pitcher.

Add lime juice, triple sec or other orange liqueur, salt, sugar, and tequila. Add ice cubes and shake for 2 to 3 minutes. Strain into glasses. Garnish with fresh berries.

Note: Sometimes, I simply put the berries into the jar, mash with a spoon, add the other ingredients and call it my "High Fiber Margarita." Saves lots of clean-up and it's much quicker. Try adding a sprig of lime mint when mashing the berries, and using a sprig to garnish.

Lavender-Blackberry Tart

9-inch tart

For crust:

1 1/4 cup all-purpose flour
8 tablespoons butter, softened
2 tablespoons plain yogurt
1 teaspoon lightly ground dried lavender flowers

Prepare a 9-inch baking pan by spraying it with non-stick spray. Cut a piece of parchment paper that is 1 1/2-inches wider all around than the pan. Cut 1-inch deep slits 1-inch apart all around the edge of the paper. Fit paper into the pan firmly, pressing the bottom inside edge and sides well, allow slits to overlap as needed. Preheat oven to 375° F.

To form crust, mix the flour, butter, yogurt, and ground lavender flowers together in a bowl to form a soft dough.

Press evenly in bottom of pan, building up sides about 1-inch tall. Bake 12 to 15 minutes, just until crust is lightly browned on the edges. Remove crust from oven. Reduce oven temperature to 350° F.

For filling:

2 cups fresh blackberries

3/4 cup yogurt
3/4 cup sugar
3 egg yolks
1/4 cup flour
1 teaspoon lightly ground dried lavender flowers
3 tablespoons blackberry jam or lavender jelly

Meanwhile to prepare the filling, rinse 2 cups fresh blackberries, drain if required. If using frozen berries, allow to thaw and drain.

In a bowl, mix together yogurt, sugar, egg yolks, flour, and lightly ground dried lavender flowers.

When crust is ready, place berries evenly over the crust. Pour batter over the top and place in center of oven. Bake until filling is set, about 45 minutes.

Melt blackberry jam or lavender jelly in the microwave or small saucepan over low heat. Spread gently over tart. Allow to cool.

Note: Make this tart with other fruits such as apricots, blueberries, or peaches. Use the same fruit-flavored yogurt instead of plain yogurt, if desired, but reduce the sugar in the filling to 1/2 cup if using fruited yogurt. Glaze with the same fruit jam or jelly, or use melted apple jelly or lavender jelly.

Blackberry-Rose Muffins

Makes 18 muffins

2 teaspoons dried rose petals
1 tablespoon brown sugar
2 1/2 cups flour
4 teaspoons baking powder
1/4 cup brown sugar
1/4 cup butter, softened
2 eggs
3/4 cup milk
2 to 4 tablespoons rosewater (if using commercial rosewater, use 2 tablespoons since it is much stronger)
1 cup blackberries (if frozen, drain well after thawing)

Lightly oil 18 muffin cups or use paper liners. Preheat oven to 400° F.

Prepare topping by finely grinding dried rose petals to make 2 teaspoons. Add brown sugar and process lightly in small food processor or spice grinder; set aside.

In small mixing bowl, mix together the flour and baking powder.

In large mixing bowl, beat brown sugar and butter together until light and fluffy. Add eggs and beat until smooth. Add milk and rosewater to taste. Gradually stir in flour mixture, mixing just until flour is moist and adding blackberries at the very last. Do not over mix.

Divide mixture into 18 muffin cups. Sprinkle tops with prepared topping of brown sugar and ground rose petals. Bake 20 to 22 minutes, until lightly browned. Serve with rose butter.

About the Author

Carolee Snyder is a professional herb-grower for over forty years, but now just gardens for the joy and love of it. When not in the gardens, she's creating recipes or preserving the harvest, or traveling to visit gardens around the world. Visit her at herbalblessingsblog.wordpress.com



Wild Rubus Leaves Photo by Susan Belsinger

Blackberry Leaf Tea

By Bobbie Cyphers

Late morning before the heat of the day, collect the youngest, most tender, blackberry leaves. For the best flavor and benefits, ferment them by bruising the fresh leaves using a mortar and pestle or rolling pin. Pack the leaves firmly into sterilized jars and place them on a sunny windowsill for about a month. You'll notice the leaves have blackened and release a blackberry fragrance.

Place the fermented leaves onto a baking sheet and in the oven on the lowest temperature setting. Check every 15 minutes (or use a dehydrator). Once they're crispy, crush them and store in an airtight container out of direct sun.

Use one heaping teaspoon per cup.

The Literary *Rubus*

By Bobbie Cyphers

Like Cicero I have everything I need. I have a garden and I have a library, and in my romp through the genus *Rubus*, I pulled many a book from the shelf. I found books on pruning, more than a few on cultivating, dozens on training and gardening, as well as using and cooking with brambles. So, I decided to see where else these plants might be lurking.

Of course, Shakespeare had something to say.

No, I will not cast away my physic but on those that are sick. There is a man haunts the forest that abuses our young plants with carving "Rosalind" on their barks, hangs odes upon hawthorns and elegies on brambles, all, forsooth, deifying the name of Rosalind. If I could meet that fancy-monger I would give him some good counsel, for he seems to have the quotidian of love upon him.

---Rosalind in *As You Like It*, Act 3, Scene 2

*If reasons were as plentiful as blackberries,
I would give no man a reason upon compulsion.*

---Henry IV, Part 1, Act 2, Scene 4

And then there's John Keats' poem.

Meg Merrililes

*Old Meg she was a Gipsy,
And liv'd upon the Moors:
Her bed it was the brown heath turf,
And her house was out of doors.*

*Her apples were swart blackberries,
Her currants pods o' broom;
Her wine was dew of the wild white rose,
Her book a churchyard tomb.*

*Her Brothers were the craggy hills,
Her Sisters larchen trees—
Alone with her great family
She liv'd as she did please.*

*No breakfast had she many a morn,
No dinner many a noon,
And 'stead of supper she would stare
Full hard against the Moon.
But every morn of woodbine fresh
She made her garlanding,
And every night the dark glen Yew
She wove, and she would sing.
And with her fingers old and brown*

*She plaited Mats o' Rushes,
And gave them to the Cottagers
She met among the Bushes.
Old Meg was brave as Margaret Queen
And tall as Amazon:
An old red blanket cloak she wore;
A chip hat had she on.
God rest her aged bones somewhere—
She died full long ago!*

Basket and baskets of brambles are ripe for the picking in children's books. Flopsy, Mopsy, and Cotton-tail, who were good little bunnies, went down the lane to gather blackberries in *Peter Rabbit* by Beatrix Potter.



I found, too, that brambles haunt fairytales...

But Night sat silent and still. The mother then wrung her hands, wept, and sang. There were many songs sung, but still more tears were shed. Then Night said: "Go to the right, in the gloomy forest of pines, it was thither I saw Death carrying the little child."

In the depths of the wood was a cross way, and she knew not which direction to take. There stood a bramble-bush, without either leaves or flowers, for it was cold winter, and icicles hung to the twigs.

"Have you not seen Death go past with my little child?"

"Yes," said the bramble-bush; "but I will not tell you which way he has taken, until you have warmed me on your bosom. I am freezing here to death, and turning to ice."

And she pressed the bramble-bush close to her breast, in order that it might thaw. And the thorns ran into her flesh, and her blood trickled down in large drops. But the bramble-bush put forth green leaves, and blossomed in the cold winter's night—for warm, indeed, is the heart of an afflicted mother! And the bramble-bush told her the way she was to go.

The Fairy Tales of Hans Christian Andersen (c1899).djvu/244

As well as fables...

THE POMEGRANATE and Apple-Tree disputed as to which was the most beautiful. When their strife was at its height, a Bramble from the neighboring hedge lifted up its voice, and said in a boastful tone: "Pray, my dear friends, in my presence at least cease from such vain disputings."
---Aesop

And reside in sacred places...

(Authors of *Plants of the Bible*, Harold N. Moldenke Ph.D. and Alma L. Moldenke, B.A. were of the opinion the briars and brambles mentioned in these passages, referred to *Rubus sanctus*, the holy bramble.)

But if ye do not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you; then it shall come to pass, that those which yet let remain of them shall be pricks in your eyes, and thorns in your sides, and shall vex you in the land wherein ye dwell.

---Numbers – chapter 33, verse 55 KJV

And Gideon said, "Therefore when the Lord hath delivered Zebah and Zalmunna into mine hand, then I will tear your flesh with the thorns of the wilderness and with briars."

---Judges – chapter 8, verse 7 KJV

It shall happen in that day, That wherever there could be a thousand vines worth a thousand shekels of silver, it will be for briars and thorns.

---Isaiah – chapter 7, verse 23, 24, 25) KJV

For wickedness burns as the fire; it shall devour the briars and thorns, and kindle in the thickets of the forest' they shall mount up like rising smoke.

---Isaiah – chapter 9, verse 18 KJV

For every tree is known by its own fruit. For men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they gather grapes from a bramble bush.

---Luke – chapter 6, verse 44 KJV

And sometimes they quench us and make us lively in special books scribed by special writers that stay with us long after we turn the last page.

Wine talks; ask anyone. The oracle at the street corner; the uninvited guest at the wedding feast; the holy fool. It ventriloquizes. It has a million voices. It unleashes the tongue, teasing out secrets you never meant to tell, secrets you never even knew.

... So begins the novel *Blackberry Wine* by Joanne Harris. A magical imagining, weaving a tale of longing and loss and redemption. In the last – though not final – pages, we read:

Though there were many bottles in the cellar, there was only one possible choice. He wiped off the dust from the glass with a cloth, hoping time had not soured the contents. A bottle for a special occasion, he thought, the very last of his Specials, Blackberry '75. He wrapped the bottle in tissue paper and put it in his jacket pocket. A peace offering. "Blackberry '75?" she said, and smiled. "My favorite."

I didn't have to look very far for the book *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants*. It sits on top of what I refer to as my own "Specials" – books that I read again and again when I long to feed my soul as well as my mind. Described by writer Elizabeth Gilbert as "a hymn of love to the world," the book was written by the eminent scientist Robin Wall Kimmerer, with much grace and power – a recommended read to the world.

Epilogue: Returning the Gift

Red over green, raspberries bead the thicket on a summer afternoon. The blue jay picking on the other side of this patch has a beak as red-stained as my fingers, which go to my mouth as often as to the bowl. I reach under the brambles for a dangling cluster and there in the dappled shade is a grinning turtle, shin deep in fallen fruit, stretching its neck up for more. I'll let his berries be, the earth has plenty and offers us abundance, spreading her gifts over the green: strawberries, raspberries, blueberries, cherries, currants – that we might fill our bowls. Niibin, we call summer in Potawatomi, "the time of plenty," and also time for our tribal gathering, for powwows and ceremony.

Sources (not cited elsewhere)

Brookes, John B. 1987, *The Country Garden: A Seasonal Guide to Designing and Planting Gardens with Natural Style*. New York: Crown Publishers, Inc.

Harris, Joanne. 2000. *Blackberry Wine*. New York: Harper-Collins Publishers, Inc.

Hill, Lewis. 2016. *Pruning Made Easy: A Gardener's Guide to When and How to Prune Everything, from Flowers to Trees*. North Adams, MA: Story Publishing

Kimmerer, Robin Wall. 2013, *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants*. Minneapolis, MN: Milkweed Edition.

Lacy, Allen, 1993. *Gardening with Groundcovers and Vines*. New York: Harper- Collins Publishers, Inc

Moldenke, Harold N. and Alma. 1952. *Plants of the Bible*. Waltham, MA: Chronica Botanica

Pearson, Dan. 2001. *The Garden: A Year at Home Farm*. New York: Time Warner, Inc.

Simmons, Adelma Grenier. 1974. *Herb Gardens of Delight*. New York: Hawthorne Books, Inc.

Taylor, Jane. 1995. *Foliage for Year Round Colour*. London: Wellington House.

<https://dancingoaks.com/search?q=rubus>

<https://www.farreachesfarm.com/searchresults.asp?Search=rubus&Submit=>

https://plants.alsipnursery.com/12120002/Plant/10699/ Silver_Fern_Ghost_Bramble/

<https://www.hortmag.com/plants/plants-we-love/ghost-bramble-a-great-shrub-for- winter-interest>

<https://www.brokenarrownursery.com/rubus-cockburnianus-ghost-bramble.html>

<https://www.plantdelights.com/products/rubus-pentalobus-emerald-carpet>

<https://plants.ces.ncsu.edu/plants/rubus-odoratus/>

https://indianaberry.com/info_blkberry_variety.php

<https://gardenerspath.com/plants/fruit/best-raspberry-varieties/>

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/agricultural-and-biological-sciences/rubus>

<http://www.deplique.net/the-history-of-the-cloudberry.html>

<https://www.seriousseats.com/2014/08/berry-types-what-are-olalieberries-tayberries-loganberries.html#dewberry>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/rubus_glaucus

<http://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/PlantFinder/PlantFinderDetails.aspx?taxonid=286644&isprofile=0&>

<https://www.windellamaorganics.com/blog/2017/10/10/homegrown-blackberry-leaf-tea>

http://wildflowersofskopelos.org.uk/Pink/Pages/Rubus_sanctus.html

<https://extension.umaine.edu/publications/2066e/>

<https://www.raspberryblackberry.com/>

<https://www.fruit-crops.com/blackberry-and-raspberry/>