

Broadcast for August 18, 2007

Berries for You

Blackberries are a wonderful treat anywhere, especially in a pie or cobbler. Blackberries are one of the fruits highest in antioxidants per cupful

Blackberries yield better than raspberries in Missouri due to much better heat tolerance.

Blackberries fall into one of 3 cane architecture categories: erect, semi-erect and trailing. In Missouri, the erect and semi-erect types are grown. Erect blackberries will spread and form a hedge row while semi-erect remain as separate plants with canes growing from a defined crown that does not spread out.

Dr. John Clark in Arkansas has a continuing blackberry breeding program with more thornless and floricanes fruiting varieties with excellent handling after harvest and a broad range of ripening or maturing dates. He names his variety releases after American Indian tribes.

His latest releases from Arkansas are the erect and thorny varieties: Cherokee, Comanche, Cheyenne, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Kiowa and Shawnee. Thornless varieties are Apache, Arapaho, Navaho and Ouachita.

Even though, erect blackberries can be grown without a trellis, more people are using 2-wire "T" trellises where wires run along the outer edge of the blackberry rows at 3 to 4 feet high and 2 to 2.5 feet apart to protect the canes from wind damage. Many times 2 lower wires are also used with these at about 12-18" off the ground and 18-24" between the wires.

Chester and Triple Crown are recommended semi-erect varieties for commercial production in Missouri. Semi-erect blackberries require a trellis.

Blackberries in commercial cultivation produce fruit only on canes that grew the previous season, so in any one season blackberries produce

fruit on 2 year old floricanes and will produce new primocanes in the current season for next years crop. Both erect and semi-erect blackberry primocanes can be “tipped” during the growing season to induce lateral branching. These lateral branches bear the crop next year.

Recently there has been some great advances in the Arkansas breeding program. They have released PrimeArk, a primocane (first year) fruiting variety that is fruit is produced that year. Primocane producing blackberry varieties Prime-Jim and Prime-Jan have been released so far. These varieties are best suited for home gardens.

Blackberries are 4th in popularity among US consumers, behind strawberries, blueberries and red raspberries.

Patrick Byers, Fruit Grower Specialist at the State Fruit Experimentation Station at Mountain Grove, MO has these blackberry varieties as his best pick:

Navaho – for keeping quality

Chester – for a semi-erect variety

Apache – for an upright thornless variety

Chickasaw – for un-upright thorny variety

Kiowa – for the biggest berries