

Blackberries

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Blackberry plants are excellent additions to Texas home gardens. They can be grown easily in small areas, they tolerate the high temperatures of Texas summers, and they bear abundant fruit in spring and early summer.

Grow it

Growth and production:

- Blackberries have two types of stems called “canes”: primocanes, which grow during the current season, and floricanes, which are 1 year old and produce fruit. Floricanes die after the fruit crop matures.

Types and varieties:

- Cultivated blackberries are classified as either floricanes-bearing or primocane-bearing. Floricanes-bearing varieties flower and set fruit only on floricanes and have both thorny and thornless varieties. To date, the primocane-bearing varieties have fruited poorly in the fall, and only floricanes-bearing varieties are recommended.
- Kiowa and Brazos are good thorny varieties and Natchez is a good thornless.

Soil

- The best soil for blackberries is well-drained and at least 1 foot deep. If the soil drains slowly, plant blackberries on raised beds or mounded planting rows.
- Blackberries can tolerate a soil pH range of 4.5 to 7.5; above 7.5, iron chelate will be needed.

Planting

- Blackberries are available as bareroot or container plants.
- Dormant bareroot plants should be planted in mid to late winter. It is best to plant container plants in early spring, but with appropriate watering, they can be planted in the fall or winter as well.
- Space the plants 2 to 3 feet apart in rows 8 to 12 feet apart.

Training and pruning:

- Plants may be supported by a trellis or by planting near a fence to reduce fruit decay caused by ground contact. Plants may also be left free-standing.

Fertilization:

- Blackberries respond to two fertilizer applications—one in early spring right before budbreak and a second after harvest in June, if the growth is poor.
- If your soil pH is below 7.0, use a 15-5-10 fertilizer for the spring application and a 21-0-0 fertilizer for the June application.
- If your soil pH is above 7.0, use a 21-0-0 fertilizer for both applications.
- Use ½ pound of fertilizer per 10 feet of row.

Weed control:

- Control weeds to increase fruit production, reduce diseases, and allow for easier harvesting.
- Before planting, kill all perennial weeds. Then, use an organic mulch of hay, wood chips, pine straw, or bark to control weed growth.

Watering:

- Water blackberry plants regularly to encourage growth and full-sized fruit production.
- Begin watering in March or April and reduce watering by September to slow new growth.

Harvesting:

- In May and early June, blackberries will ripen and become ready for harvest.
- Berries will change color from red to glossy black to dull black at maturity. Harvest after they turn dull black for the sweetest berries.
- Because blackberries are perishable, they must be picked often and refrigerated directly after harvesting.



Sun:
Full



Soil:
Well-drained



Planting:
Cool



Harvest:
Summer



Life Cycle:
Perennial



Container Friendly:
Thornless Variety



Buy it

Choose fruit that are firm, not bruised or leaking.

Store it

Refrigerate unwashed blackberries for 3 to 6 days.
Wash just before using.

Use it

Blackberry Chipotle Chicken

Course: Main Dish

Serves: 4

Cook time: 40 minutes

Ingredients:

Chicken

- 16 oz. chicken breast, boneless, skinless and cut into 4 individual cutlets
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1/4 tsp. pepper

Chipotle Blackberry Sauce

- 4 tsp. extra virgin olive oil
- 1 medium shallot or sweet onion, diced
- 16 oz. fresh blackberries
- 1 chipotle pepper in adobo sauce (canned), diced
- 2 tsp. brown sugar
- 1 Tbsp. balsamic vinegar
- 1 Tbsp. mint leaves minced

Instructions:

Clean your preparation area and wash your hands.

Preheat the oven to 375°F.

Rinse any fresh fruits and herbs under cool running water to remove debris.

Sprinkle the salt and pepper on the chicken.

In a nonstick pan heat up 2 teaspoons of the olive oil over medium to medium-high heat. Place the chicken in the skillet and let brown for 3 to 5 minutes. Place chicken, browned side up, on a baking sheet.

Bake chicken for 20 to 25 minutes or until internal temperature has reached 165°F.

While chicken is cooking in the oven, heat a 3-quart saucepan on medium-high heat. Add 2 teaspoons of olive oil and the diced shallots. Sauté for 3 to 4 minutes or until soft. Add blackberries, chipotle pepper, brown sugar, and balsamic vinegar. Bring to a boil, reduce heat, cover and simmer for 10 minutes.

Remove sauce from heat and let cool for 5 minutes. Serve the sauce over the chicken and top with mint leaves.

Peach and Blackberry Salad

Course: Side Dish

Serves: 6

Ingredients:

Dressing

- 1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil
- 1 lemon, zested and juiced
- 1 Tbsp. fresh basil, minced
- 1/2 tsp. salt

Salad

- 6 oz. baby spinach and spring mix
- 1/4 cup reduced fat feta cheese, crumbled
- 1/4 cup almonds, sliced
- 1/2 pint fresh blackberries, halved
- 2 medium peaches, sliced

Instructions:

Wash your hands and clean your food preparation area.

Wash all produce and fruit before preparing salad.

Using a canning jar, pour in olive oil, zest and juice of 1 lemon, minced fresh basil, and salt. Cover the jar with lid and shake until blended well. Let sit.

Toss spinach and spring mix in a large bowl. Top greens with feta cheese, walnut pieces, blackberries, and sliced peaches.

Pour dressing over salad and gently toss.

Learn about it

Blackberries are low fat, saturated fat free, cholesterol free, sodium free, and an excellent source of vitamin C, vitamin K, copper, zinc, and fiber.¹

¹Have a Plant. (2021). Blackberries. Produce for Better Health Foundation. Retrieved from: <https://fruitsandveggies.org/fruits-and-veggies/blackberries/?view=facts>.

