

## Late summer fruiting Raspberries, what a treat!

I don't know about you, but I never get tired of fresh picked home grown Raspberry's. The flavour of these freshly picked little gems always seems to be so much better than the supermarket varieties.

I've never confessed to being a great gardener, but I do like to have a go, especially when it comes to growing fruit and veg. I don't use any special techniques, all I do is try different methods, and then wait to see which one produces the best results. Take the Raspberries as a case in point.

I wandered up the garden at the weekend to weed between the Chrysanthemums, and noticed we had ripe raspberries, which was a bit of a surprise, as I thought they finished fruiting ages ago, but what I'd forgotten was, the canes I planted 2 years ago were both summer and late summer fruiting varieties. (Labeling is not my strongest point)

When I looked a bit closer and lifted a few of the branches and the canes were loaded with fruit, which was fantastic news as we don't have any other fruit ready for picking anywhere else in the garden. The strawberries are all finished and I don't have any currant bushes or gooseberries. The tree fruits have a few weeks to go before they are ready, apart from the Plums which should be ready sooner, so it's fantastic that we have some fresh fruit for the table.

Of course I had to taste a few, just to make sure they were suitable for the table 😊. The variety is 'Leo' which is actually a late summer fruiting variety with a gorgeous flavour and the fruits are firm and fleshy.

## Secret to a good crop of Raspberries

I'd never grown raspberries until a couple of years ago when I thought I'd give them a go. As I had no real experience I didn't give them any special treatment, but they only produced a few fruits. Then I read that Raspberries don't really tolerate chalk as they prefer a slightly acidic soil, which considering my garden is sitting on a layer of chalk, was probably responsible for the poor crop.

Then, last Spring (April) I had to move my canes as I needed the ground for another project. This time I thought I'd give them a bit more care as I wanted to prove to the family that we could fruit on our chalk soil.

I'd read somewhere that Raspberry canes thrive on damp conditions, so I thought I'd give them the same preparation as my runner beans. I dug a small trench, about a foot wide and about 8" deep, and put 2-3 sheets of newspaper at the bottom of the trench. Then replaced the chalky soil with a 50/50 mix of topsoil (imported) and well-composted farmyard manure. (Apparently the newspaper helps to hold the moisture in)

The plants were heeled in nice and deep as the roots need to be well below the surface to stop them drying out, then a month later I top dressed the plants with a 4" layer of general garden compost.

I'm pleased to say the plants have repaid all that effort with healthy looking bushes and best of all, loads of succulent, tasty fruit. I don't protect my raspberries from the birds as there's enough

to go round, but if you see any sign of significant bird damage, then I'd have no hesitation of erecting a fruit net.

## **Autumn Pruning**

I'm going to prune the late fruiting bushes hard back when they have finished fruiting, and give them a sprinkling of bone meal around the base of the plant, by way of a thank you for providing us with so many treats this summer. We have an early summer fruiting variety, 'Glen Moy' which fruits on the previous years growth, so I'll remove any 2 year old wood from the patch and tie the remaining canes in to the wires.

If you plan to plant your own canes, then ideally you should plant them this autumn, so they have a chance to get established before they burst into growth next Spring, and if you're on chalk, or any soil for that matter, take the time to prepare the soil as I did, and you will be eating raspberries for the entire summer.

Next year I'm going to add a couple of redcurrant bushes and maybe a couple of Gooseberry bushes so we have a bit more variety.

If you have space for a few canes then give them a go, not only will they produce gorgeous fruit, but they also make a great summer screen.

Best wishes,

Tania.