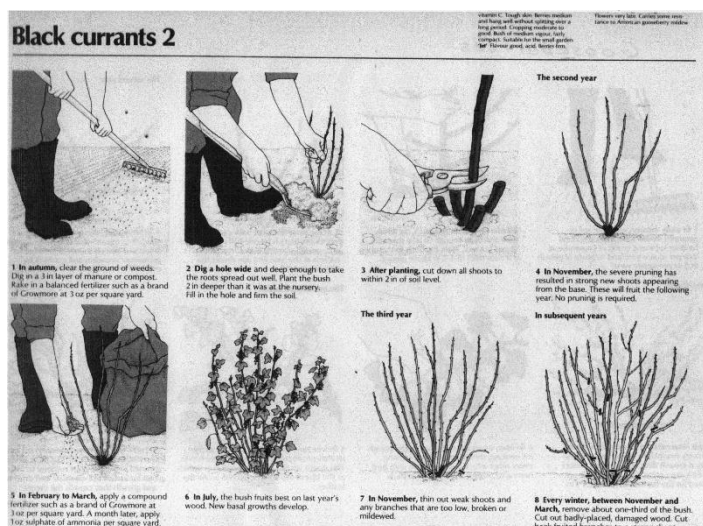


Caring for & Enjoying Soft fruit

Long Range Weather

It is likely turning more unsettled during the end of this week through week 31. August to 6. September, as low pressure becomes more dominant.

This is bringing showers or longer spells of rain, perhaps heavy, to most if not all areas of the British Isles. Though at times we might still have some sunny interludes. Possibly expect windy spells at times too. Temperatures are likely near to average though varying with some short-lived warm and humid spells possible, especially in the south.



Blackberries, Raspberries, Boysenberries, & Loganberries

You might have noticed that the blackberries are flowering a second time after a very early and extended fruiting in the end of June and right through July and beginning of August. I personally love blackberries particularly for making jam with fallen apples and pears.

If you want to encourage good cropping from blackberries and raspberries this Sept & October prune off the dying old fruiting branches back to main, thick leading shoots and you will get another slightly smaller crop.

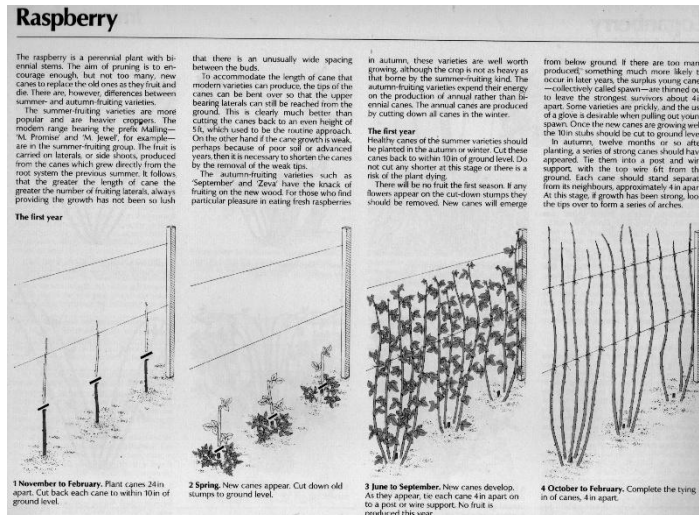
Prune all small, thin shoots right down to ground level and concentrate energy into the new, strong shoots which are trained into horizontal wires.

The same procedure applies to boysenberries and loganberries.

If you would like to propagate any of these crops, just layer new, strong shoots by pinning them down and covering 8 inches (20 cm) of the top of the shoot leaving about 8 inches of

tip out of the ground. After a month or so you will have rooted stock to plant end of September or October into humus rich soil that is almost neutral in pH.

Raspberries are renowned for propagating by root sending out new suckers from the roots.



Raspberries

Summer Bearing Varieties

These varieties seem to be bearing fruit now right into the autumn and the differentiation of summer and autumn bearing varieties is getting blurred over the last few years in my experience in Sussex.

Harvest regularly and they are keeping flowering again and again with more fruit forming even at this time of year.

As soon as fruiting has finished prune out old shoots and leave new, strong shoots for next year's flowering and fruiting.

With Autumn bearing varieties prune right down to the ground to regrow in the new year.

If you train Raspberries like the above berry canes into horizontal 3 wires a foot apart you will get double or three times the amount of fruit from same plants.

For propagation of Raspberries the easiest is taking new shoots emerging on side of existing mother plants with stolons (roots) and transplant into your new soft fruit patch as above.

Strawberries

They are my favourites and they have been decimated by squirrels the last two years.

There are a multitude of varieties from Summer to autumn varieties.

Yet like with the cane fruits they have flowered two or three times the last few years and even summer varieties fruited right into the autumn.

If you want fruit, take all the runners off which start developing in June.

If you would like to use strongest mother plants for propagation, preferably in the second year after marking best plants the previous year, pick off all fruit to concentrate energy into shoots.

Restrict to one or two shoots and with 1 strong “baby plant” each, which is being pinned into a pot well filled with a mature, humus rich compost in July.

Sever the shoot from the mother plants as soon as the baby plant is fully rooted and has filled the pot with roots.

Transplant as above into a new Strawberry patch, which could be used to give the garden a rest from vegetable growing for three to five years.

Black & Red Currants & Gooseberries

All these bushes have finished fruiting a month ago and all fruit bearing shoots could be tip pruned taking off 4 inches/10cm. Prune back 1/3 of woody, thick shoots which are over three to four years old and very dark to 3-4 inches from the ground.

For propagation take one year old wood of 1 ¼ ft (40 cm) length from close to the base of the plants. Take off the leaves off from the first 8 inches near the base of cutting and heal it into a humus rich mix with sharp sand in angle of 45 degrees 8 inches deep.

Feeding & Mulching Soft Fruit plants

Apply to all soft fruit plants preferably well matured kitchen compost or even better well matured and humified bird or cow manure to encourage fruiting instead of leaf growth, unless you have a new planting and you want to encourage strong vegetative growth for them to establish fast.

Then apply a rich horse, sheep or goat manure in the first year at a rate of a shovel per plant.

Then mulch with 2-4 inches of a chipped hedge material or wood chips with green leaves mixed in.

This will nourish the soil life and the plants in turn.

Add an 1-2 inches of new mulch every year.

Protection from squirrels and birds

Netting is an option as long as the netting is well attached at the bottom of the cage, so squirrels can't enter.

The biodynamic way would be getting feathers from 3-4 birds or skins from 2-3 squirrels, burn the feathers or skins and spread a circle of ashes around the plants in question.

Or make a homeopathic remedy from ashes of D8 and sprinkle around planting every two months. The latest research has it that birds will stay away if homeopathic C6 potency remedy is made from a dead prey bird or a predator that would hunt squirrels like large prey birds.

Next week we'll talk about green manures.

With warm late summer greetings,

Hans-Günther - Wholistic Living University

For online and in person courses and workshops on biodynamic gardening and more visit <https://whlu.org/>