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in praise of berries

Posted in *All posts*, July on 10th July 2015

One of the best and easiest of crops for the grow-your-own gardener is the berry. A bowl of ripe berries, aromatic from the warm sun, leaking sweet juice and with an exquisite flavour is the essence of a summer day. And yet for all of their unsurpassable qualities, they are not difficult to grow.

One of the first things I did in the autumn we moved into this house was to put in a row of raspberries along the fence at the bottom. They pretty much look after themselves, with just an annual chop and a compost mulch to keep the shallow roots happy, and every year there's a fantastic crop.

As soon as I'd dug some vegetable beds in the new garden, I put in some strawberry plants. They are just as low maintenance as the raspberries. I remove all of the foliage in autumn and make sure they're mulched and watered, but other than that they require very little of me.



Down at the allotment there are always more gooseberries than I know what to do with, growing on two huge and ancient bushes, and a cultivated blackberry that now lives wild in the hedge and has literally no input from me at all.

I'm slowly exploring other berries as well. Tayberries (pictured below) are a real winner, with a heavy crop every year. They're a cross between a blackberry and a raspberry, and as you might imagine are delicious. They're rarely available to buy, so it's definitely worth growing your own.

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The Japanese wineberry (pictured below) produces tiny sticky berries with the most beautiful jewel red colour. They're a little fiddly to pick, but perfect for decorating the top of summer cakes.



On the patio I have blueberries in pots, in the ericaceous soil that they need. They like lots of water and the replacement of some of their topsoil every year, but in return I have punnet after punnet of smooth plump berries, much fresher than anything I could buy.

And I still have a few left to try. I'm growing on a tiny mulberry tree, after having tasted fresh mulberries a couple of years ago. They're sublime, and never available in the shops. And I think cranberries and lingonberries might do well at the allotment. Then there are loganberries and jostaberries and I've just heard of a new one called a tummelberry. I think I may need more space...

Thanks for reading,

Claire

useful kit...

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