

Double Cropping Raspberries
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Before making the decision to purchase a variety, I often ask growers what are their goals. Do you want something for wholesale, retail, or pick your own? Do you want summer production, fall production, or both? Will you produce berries with or without protected structures and/or trellis? Where are you located, in the cold of zone 3 or the heat of zone 7? These questions will allow me to prescribe a variety to fit their situation and should be considered in the selection process.

As a new premise to the selection process, there are several primocane fruiting varieties that offer very good summer production in addition to normal fall season harvest. There are also some varieties sold as summer bearers that produce a late fall harvest. The variety Prelude is a great example. These varieties are true 'Commercial Everbearers' and are the first I recommend for high tunnel production. Growers in zones 5 and 6 have an opportunity to over winter primocanes and harvest a second crop the following summer. This is the definition for the 'double crop' terminology.

The most successful results will be obtained when 'Commercial Everbearers' are grown on a permanent trellis system. Trellis systems can boost production by 20-30%. Trellising is not an expense, it is an investment. On average, a good trellis and pruning effort will yield 50% more berries. Like most things in life, a little extra effort results in significant benefit, in this case, yielding more successful harvests. High tunnels with trellis can double production potentials for almost all varieties.

Before continuing, I want to be sure everyone understands the following terminology.

Primocane Fruiting – A perennial raspberry that bears fruit on first year canes (primocanes). Also known as everbearing, because these biennial plants also produce berries the following summer on canes that survive the winter. While berries are produced on every variety, not every variety will yield fresh, market-quality berries in both summer and fall harvests.

Floricanes Fruiting – A perennial raspberry that bears fruit on the second year canes that survive the winter.

Commercial Everbearer – A primocane variety that produces marketable crops on both primocanes and floricanes.

Successful double cropping is accomplished with a system of pruning and trellising. The planting year's growth isn't always enough to justify producing a crop the first summer. I suggest the floricanes have a minimum height of four feet. Attaching the canes with clips to the trellis wire locks the canes into place reducing wind damage and adding winter protection. Depending on the variety, our target is 4-6 canes per foot of row. In mid to late May, we thin primocanes to 6-8 canes per foot of row. I like to leave a few extra primocanes just in case there is a problem. Once the summer harvest is finished, we remove the floricanes and clip the primocanes onto the trellis in the same spot where the floricanes was attached. Well after the primocane harvest is complete, sometime in November or early December, I recommend primocanes be topped at 4'-5' and their branches cut to 8"-12".

Monofilament trellis wire is our favorite. It is easy to work with, never rusts, and nursery clips hold canes in place. Self-locking devices, on the end posts, hold wire at the proper tension and allow easy re-tensioning. Nourse Farms has been using single and double T trellis posts and an 8 foot angle iron post with double wire. The top wire height needs to be 4'-5' high, the T's need to be 12"-24" wide.

The following varieties are considered Commercial Everbearers.

Prelude is a late producing primocane variety that we treat as a florican. This variety is a top seller because it is the earliest producing florican, starting around June 25th for us. I recommend this variety to be planted as 20-30% of a summer raspberry planting. Its harvest finishes before Encore begins. Many growers have been surprised by its abundant fall harvest especially during a late fall. I consider it a commercial everbearer for areas with longer seasons, zone 5 or higher. The berry can be soft, especially during high temperatures and if it is not picked every other day. Prelude performs in many climates. It is subject to winter damage in zone 4.

Anne is the only golden variety we offer, but is capable of fruiting as a Commercial Everbearer. Summer and fall harvests of the largest best tasting golden raspberries will occur with a little extra effort. They are susceptible to botrytis mold and need regular fungicide applications. We always try to pick the berries in the morning.

Caroline picks a week earlier than Heritage and berries are twice the size. It has great flavor and yield. To reach its full yield potential, it should be planted in zone 6 or lower. If exposed to high summer temperatures and it is not drip irrigated, the first few pickings will give crumbly berries. Though florican harvest can be crumbly, many growers pick the summer and fall berries. While I recommend all raspberries be trellised, this one must be trellised.

Himbo Top® (RAFZAQU) is very tolerant to Phytophthora root rot. I have been impressed by both its production and winter hardiness. The fruit tends to be lighter colored and doesn't darken after picking. This is another variety that must be thinned and trellised for best results. Himbo Top also requires much less nitrogen than normal, it will be too soft if fed the same as other varieties. It is a great choice for organic production.

Joan J has very high yield potentials, but it must be trellised and thinned. The top trellis wire should be at least 50-60 inches high. Our new trellis had the greatest yield when the top wire was 72 inches, but most of our pickers couldn't reach the top berries. I would also suggest trying a double T trellis. Joan J's berries are large and flavorful with a very smooth texture. They will get very dark if not picked every other day and will darken after harvest. This would be of concern for those selling to super markets. As a commercial everbearer it has a lot of potential, it is not certain that it will consistently overwinter in zone 5 or lower. This variety is a great choice for tunnel production. It is susceptible to late rust.