

Did You Know?



Rubus spp. Brambles

- The *Rubus* genus is a diverse 250-700 species, and is included in the Rosacea or rose family. It hybridizes easily.
- Common name for members of this genus include brambles, brambleberries, caneberries as well as individually known as raspberries, blackberries and hybrids such as loganberries and boysenberries.
- An easy way to tell a blackberry from a raspberry, black raspberry or wineberry is that when a blackberry is picked, the stem and receptacle remain on the berry. Conversely, the receptacle and stem remain on the plant when a raspberry, black raspberry or wineberry is picked, making the center of the fruit hollow.
- The stem that supports the cluster of flowers, which then form into fruit is called a peduncle.
- We know from stone age fossils, early Roman poets, Greek dramatist, and physician writings as early as 523 BCE that raspberries and blackberries were consumed by humans, likely for both food and medicine. In fact, cultures around the world, including the Ayurvedic tradition of India, traditional Chinese and other Asian medicine, have used *Rubus* spp. for medicinal purposes.
- Greek physician Hippocrates treated issues with childbirth as well as wounds and other ailments with astringent poultices made from blackberry leaves soaked in white wine.
- Additional ancient medicinal uses included decoctions of the branches to dye hair, prevent stomach aches and to treat a variety of other symptoms including mouth sores, droopy eyes, hemorrhoids and snakebites. Leaves have been used to treat ulcers, mouth sores, tuberculosis, kidney stones, nausea and more.
- European herbalists, Native Americans and English settlers believed that the berries to have medicinal uses.
- Medieval Europeans used the berry juices in their paintings and to illustrate manuscripts. Only the wealthy had the opportunity to include the berries in their diet.
- Cultivation of berries began in England with King Edward I (1272-1307).
- Concentrated black raspberry juice was used in the early 1900's as an edible food dye and are now being tested as antiviral, antiallergenic and cosmetic moisturizing compounds.

Did You Know?



- Today, infusions or tinctures of red raspberry leaf are used as an astringent, anti-inflammatory, and to address reproductive concerns. The fruits have antimicrobial, antioxidant and anti-inflammatory effects due to the anthocyanin content.

For more information on *Rubus* spp., including history, growing tips, cultivars and recipes, see
The Herb Society of America's Essential Guide to *Rubus*, available soon.