

Blackberry Cultivars Suitable for Production in Missouri



It is important to choose the right blackberry cultivar (variety) to grow in Missouri. Without the right cultivar, it is hard to have a successful harvest.

Types of blackberries

Blackberry plants are usually productive for 10-15 years in Missouri. However, each plant's canes are biennial. This means that they live for only two years. Blackberries grow new canes from the roots and from the plant crown. The

first year's cane growth is known as the primocane. In the second year, the same cane is known as the floricanes. Floricane-bearing blackberries produce a fruit crop in early summer on the floricanes. At that time, the primocanes are vegetative only. Primocane-bearing blackberries produce a fruit crop on primocanes in the fall after having produced a crop in early summer on the floricanes. Primocane blackberries can be managed for the primocane crop only. To do so, prune the plants to the ground during the winter. Or, they can be double cropped (growing two crops on the same plant.) on both the primocanes and the floricanes. The primocane blackberry cultivars that are now available grow poorly in hot summer temperatures. Therefore, they are not recommended for commercial fruit production in Missouri. Instead, choose a floricanes berry cultivar.

Two types of blackberries are commercially produced in Missouri: erect or semi-erect. Erect blackberries are available as either floricanes-bearing or primocane-bearing. Erect blackberries produce new canes from both the roots and crowns. This means that, over time, the plants will form a hedgerow. The second type of blackberry is the semi-erect blackberry. Semi-erect blackberry cultivars are all summer-bearing. Semi-erect blackberries can only produce new canes from the crown.

They have a clump growth habit. A third type of blackberry, the trailing blackberry, is not winter hardy. Hence, it is not commonly grown commercially in Missouri.

Commercial blackberry farmers should consider the following criteria when selecting cultivars:

- **Climatic adaptation:** Look for winter hardiness and the ability to tolerate high temperatures during the growing season.
- **Thornlessness:** You may favor thornless if you have a "pick-your-own" market.
- **Disease resistance:** It is important to find cultivars resistant to phytophthora (water mold) root rot and orange rust (a fungal disease).
- **Cultural system:** If protected culture (e.g., high tunnel, greenhouse) is used, select cultivars adapted to this system; adaptation to the desired trellis/training system is another important selection criteria.
- **Productivity:** Higher yield means more profit. However, make sure that you are not compromising the taste.
- **Fruit taste, size and firmness:** Big, firm fruits are easier to harvest and handle, and may have a longer shelf-life.
- **Use of the fruit:** Most of the Missouri blackberry crop is intended for fresh fruit sales; cultivars adapted to this use are preferred.
- **Marketing plan:** Most blackberries commercially grown in Missouri are intended for local, direct market sales; cultivars adapted for this market are preferred.



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Blackberry Cultivars (continued)

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Types of cultivars of blackberries adapted for growth in Missouri.

Cultivar	Flowering Habit	Harvest Time	Size g/berry	Yield (lbs./acre)	Description/Reference
'Illini' (* Nourse Farms 2016b) 	Erect thorny	Late June to July	3.70	207.22	<p>This hardy cultivar should be grown only where winter temperatures are too extreme for other blackberry cultivars. It has productive, erect bushes and a long fruiting period. Fruit are small to medium, glossy and mildly tart. Fruit quality is only fair.</p> <p><i>(Ames and Byers 2006; Nourse Farms 2016b; Smith 2002)</i></p>


Cultivar	Flowering Habit	Harvest Time	Size g/berry	Yield (lbs./acre)	Description/Reference
'Kiowa' (*Edible Landscaping 2016) 	Erect thorny	Late June to July	5.04	160.07	<p>Plants are vigorous and productive. 'Kiowa' produces the largest berry of the erect blackberry cultivars. It can suffer damage in moderate to severe winters.</p> <p><i>(Ames and Byers 2006; Edible Landscaping 2016; Smith 2002)</i></p>


Cultivar	Flowering Habit	Harvest Time	Size g/berry	Yield (lbs./acre)	Description/Reference
'Chickasaw' (*Ison's Nursery & Vineyards 2016) 	Erect thorny	Late June to July	5.04	160.07	<p>Plants are vigorous and productive. This cultivar consistently produces large berries of good quality.</p> <p><i>(Ames and Byers 2006; Ison's Nursery & Vineyards 2016; Smith 2002)</i></p>


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Blackberry Cultivars (continued)


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Cultivar	Flowering Habit	Harvest Time	Size g/berry	Yield (lbs./acre)	Description/Reference
<p>'Shawnee' (*Aaron's Farm 2016)</p> 	Erect thorny	Late June to July	4.05	38.80	<p>Plants are vigorous and productive. The yield is evenly distributed over a three-to-four-week period. It reliably produces medium-large, glossy berries of good quality.</p> <p><i>(Aaron's Farm 2016; Ames and Byers 2006; Smith 2002)</i></p>

Cultivar	Flowering Habit	Harvest Time	Size g/berry	Yield (lbs./acre)	Description/Reference
<p>'Navaho' (*De Groot, Inc. 2016)</p> 	Erect thornless	July to early August	3.73	151.43	<p>This is a self-supporting plant. It has firm, medium-sized fruit and medium-sized seeds. The fruit is of quality good, comparable to the thorny erect cultivars. The firm berry allows for short-term storage and shipping. It is susceptible to orange rust in Missouri.</p> <p><i>(Ames and Byers 2006; De Groot, Inc. 2016; Smith 2002)</i></p>

Cultivar	Flowering Habit	Harvest Time	Size g/berry	Yield (lbs./acre)	Description/Reference
<p>'Apache' (*Gurney's Seed & Nursery Co. 2016a)</p> 	Erect thornless	July to early August	3.79	20.91	<p>Fruit is large, moderately firm and of good quality. 'Apache' is among the hardiest of the erect, thornless cultivars. It has a hardiness equal to thorny blackberries. It is among the most productive of the erect, thornless cultivars.</p> <p><i>(Ames and Byers 2006; Gurney's Seed & Nursery Co. 2016a; Smith 2002)</i></p>

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Cultivar	Flowering Habit	Harvest Time	Size g/berry	Yield (lbs./acre)	Description/Reference
<p>'Chester' (Nourse Farms 2016a)</p> 	Semi-erect thornless	Mid-July to August	3.69	280.39	<p>This cultivar is vigorous and productive. It is resistant to cane blight. Fruit is high-quality and medium-sized. 'Chester' is more winter hardy than other semi-erect, thornless blackberry cultivars that grow in Missouri. Trellising is recommended.</p> <p>(Ames and Byers 2006; Nourse Farms 2016a; Smith 2002)</p>

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