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SMALL FRUITS & ASPARAGUS

BLACK RASPBERRIES bear fruit in late June through July. **Planting:** In the row, plants should be spaced 30 inches apart with spacing between rows at 8 feet. Plant black, purple, and yellow raspberries about 2 inches deeper than the nursery depth. At planting time, the canes of the black raspberry should be cut off at ground level. New canes are borne from the crown of the plant rather than from root suckers. **Pruning:** Each plant is pruned on an individual basis. Since the canes grow to an unmanageable length, summer tipping is required. When the new growth reaches 36 inches, remove 3-4 inches of growth. This may take several trimmings to trim all the canes as they reach 3 feet. Topping increases lateral branches and makes the plant more upright. During the dormant season, select 5-10 strong canes per plant and remove all others. Remove any canes that produced fruit the season before. Laterals should also be headed back to 4-7 inches.

RED RASPBERRIES can be June bearing (ripen late June to August) or everbearing - which will produce in fall and the following spring. Both kinds produce new canes primarily from the root system, so they are grown more as a hedgerow. **Planting:** Red raspberries should be planted 24 inches apart in the row and 8 feet between rows. Plant the raspberries 1 inch deeper than the original nursery depth. **Pruning:** The everbearing raspberry can be pruned two different ways. If you are willing to give up the spring crop (which is usually small) the easiest way is to cut back all canes at 1-2 inches in the dormant season since the fruit is produced on new canes. Otherwise, prune as June bearing red raspberries to stay within a 12 inch wide row. Space canes 6-8 inches apart and top them at 48-60 inches high. Retain the canes with the largest diameter. Canes that have fruited the previous year should be removed.

BLACKBERRIES - Thornless trailing blackberries should be trellised. **Planting:** Plant 36-60 inches in the row and 8 feet between rows. **Pruning:** The first season, they should be summer tipped about 6 inches higher than the highest wire and tied to it during the summer months. During the dormant season, select 5-8 of the strongest canes; remove all the laterals on the lower 3 feet of the canes and tip back remaining lateral to 12-18 inches.

FERTILIZATION FOR ALL BRAMBLES: Apply no more than 5 pounds of 10-10-10 per 100 foot row the first year of planting and no more than 10 pounds in subsequent years. Do not overfertilize! If plants appear to be overly vigorous, reduce the amount of fertilizer.

RHUBARB: **Planting:** Plant crown 2 inches below soil level, 2-4 feet apart in the row with rows 3-4 feet apart. **Fertilize:** ¼ cup 5-10-10 at planting time spread liberally on top of soil. Rhubarb prefers good soil drainage.

ELDERBERRIES: **Plant:** Elderberries should be 5-7 feet apart in the row with 10 feet between rows. The berries prefer a well drained soil with a pH between 5.5-6.5. Full production occurs after 3-4 years. **Fertilize:** 2 oz. of ammonium nitrate per year of the plant's age; up to no higher than 1 lb./plant.

GRAPES – Planting: Plant grapes with the roots 4-6 inches below the soil and at 6 feet centers in the row. Prune off damaged roots and spread the rest. Prune back to one cane and leave only 2-3 nodes on the remaining canes. After the danger of spring frost, remove all but the two strongest shoots. Remove all flower clusters the first year. Vines can be staked as needed. A standard trellis is about 6 foot tall with wires at 3 and 6 feet to support the grapes. Mature grapes produce much more wood than they can support or need. **Pruning:** Typically 90% of the new growth of a mature grapevine is removed during the dormant season. Plan on leaving 3-4 buds per foot of horizontal trunk. Grapes bear their fruit on one year old wood. **Fertilize** grapes 2-3 weeks after planting with 8 oz. of 10-10-10, keeping the fertilizer 1 foot away from the vine. In subsequent years, apply 1-2 lb. of 10-10-10 per plant before the bud start to swell in the spring. If the vines are too vigorous, omit Nitrogen for 1-2 years. Maintain soil pH level between 5.6-6.4.

STRAWBERRIES are either June bearing or everbearing. June bearers produce in June, while everbearing plants will produce fewer berries over a longer season. Keep new plants in a refrigerator until planting. Do not wet, until about ½ hour prior to planting. **Planting:** June bearing strawberries 18-24 inches apart down the row, with rows 3 feet apart. Plant to a depth to cover the roots but not covering the growing part of the crown. Do not allow the roots to dry out in the planting process. Everbearing strawberries should be planted 5-9 inches apart down the row and should be mulched immediately since they are sensitive to warm soil temperatures. Mulch with 4 inches of clean straw. **Pruning:** Remove flower buds on everbearing types through early July. Remove all flower buds on June bearing types to strengthen the plant for next year. **Fertilize** by adding 2 pounds of 10-10-10 per 100 feet of row after planting and 2 pounds again in late August. Everbearing types should be fertilized once monthly June through September 1 with 1 lb. 10-10-10. **Overwinter** by mulching with 4 inches of clean wheat straw in December and remove in mid to late March.

BLUEBERRIES are very drought sensitive, so plant them on your best soils and use a good 4 inch layer of mulch around them. **Plant** at a distance of 5 feet down the row and 6 feet between rows. The amendment of organic matter to the planting hole at a 50-50 mix greatly improves results. **Pruning:** Plants should be pruned back 50% the first year and remove any flower buds to put the strength back into the plant. Pruning blueberries is a renewal process. The goal is to renew the older, decreasingly productive canes by cutting them out and forcing new canes. Prune sometime in March. When thinning canes, try to maximize light by removing centermost canes. A mature plant of 6 years should be producing 3-5 new canes per year. **Fertilization:** Do not fertilize the first year, since the root system is very susceptible to burning at this stage. Always fertilize with ammonium sulfate in March or April. Apply 4 oz. per plant in year two, 5 oz. per plant in year three, 6 oz. in year four, and 7 oz. the fifth year, ending up with 8 oz. the sixth and subsequent years. pH range should be kept at 4.5-5.0.

ASPARAGUS prefers a well drained soil. It likes a pH of 7.0 or higher. Organic matter worked into the soil will help with drainage in heavy soils and also with new root expansion. **Planting:** In clay soils, asparagus should be planted in trenches 6 inches deep. Crowns should be planted between 8-12 inches on center. Distance between rows should be 4-5 feet apart. **Fertilization:** At planting time, 0-46-0 super phosphate could be put in the bottom of the trench. Once planted, cover crowns with 3 inches of soil. Let the plants grow through that for about six weeks; then add another 3 inches of soil. Do not harvest any spears the year you plant OR the following year. The third year you can harvest for 2 weeks.