



GARDENING

If you want your name to go down in gardening history, mucking about with a few berries would seem to be a good place to start. Ever since Judge Logan crossed a raspberry with the American dewberry to create the loganberry at the end of the last century (finding its way to these shores in 1897), there has been an ever-increasing range of hybrid fruits — and with increasingly unlikely names. There's the June-cropping 'Hildaberry', for instance, named after the wife of the gardener responsible, and the 'Marionberry'. Many of these hybrid berries crop quite heavily from mid-July through into August, filling the gap before the wild blackberries are ready. I remember as a child, standing in the shrubbery and

picking hundreds of loganberries from a plant sprawling against the fence. Harvesting was the children's job because it required small hands to thread their way among the thorny stems — even those that were utterly inappropriately named Thornless Loganberry 'LY59'.

When raw, loganberries taste acid and a little sour. Their true worth is only discovered when they're cooked and used in pies, jams and sorbets. However, that didn't seem to deter young mouths, because we still managed to eat most of them — one for me, one for the basket and so on until the stomach aches set in and the juice was running down our T-shirts.

The modern varieties of raspberry, blackberry and loganberry are admirable, but for something more interesting and tastier, try a fruit from the new tribe

of hybrids. They're remarkably trouble free compared to many other fruits, and I can usually manage to squeeze one of the less vigorous types into even the smallest garden, where they'll clothe a fence or a wall about 8ft long and 6-7ft high. They'll grow almost anywhere, even in partial shade, and if you choose a good plant you'll get a healthy crop for 20 years with the minimum of fuss. Give them a good mulch of well-rotted manure and a feed of Growmore or seaweed solution in the spring, and all you have to worry about is how to keep the birds off.

Most hybrids prefer a half-decent soil that doesn't dry out. The exception is the boysenberry, which is drought-resistant and definitely the choice for a sandy soil. A thornless variety doesn't do as well as its prickly cousin.

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 raspberries,
 and
 berries, left, are
 ing matched for
 flavour by new
 species such as the
 Japanese wineberry,
 main picture, and
 hybrids such as,
 bottom far left,
 the Australian
 silvanberry and,
 bottom left,
 tayberries

FEELING FRUITY

Raspberries in July and blackberries in September. But what about August? **ANDY STURGEON** explains why he has a crush on hybrids



fruits are sweet with a blackberry taste that gives an indication of its parentage. These berries mostly fruit on young stems up to two years old — to keep the yield high, the old stems should be cut out on an annual basis in autumn and the new stems tied in horizontally.

Generally, the plants grow like a cross between blackberries and raspberries, but take care when bending the canes as they can be brittle. You can grow them easily on strong wires between posts, but provided it's not an assault course to pick them, they can be tucked away on a fence or wall — particularly as they're not the most 'ractive' of plants.

exception to this is the wineberry, a species in its own right. The stems are gracefully covered in a wonderful covering of thorns. The scot-stiles rather than wind damage

thorns. With the flowers and fruits, it makes a good ornamental plant. The orangey-red fruits are small but delicious, and there's less chance of being savaged by the stems. As with most plants, there is some sort of compromise — in this case a small crop that ripens all at once in August. Unlike the hybrid berries, these come true from seed, which you will discover once they start popping up all over the garden.

If you have room for only one berry, then it must be the 'Medana Tayberry', a raspberry/blackberry cross developed in Scotland. This crops extremely well on a plant that isn't too rampant, and the fruit is up to three times as big as a loganberry. The taste is also leagues ahead, the dark red berries sweeter and aromatic. On top of that, the plants are virus free and shouldn't cause any trouble unless they are exposed in colder regions. There

aren't any thorn-free varieties as yet, but there is hope.

Another new one from north of the border is the 'Tummelberry', which wins a prize for its ruggedness. It was developed from the tayberry and some of the flavour has been lost in exchange for the increase in hardiness, so it is probably better to avoid it unless northeasterly gales howl through your garden.

The beauty of these fruits is that one plant is probably enough to provide all the berries you will need. This is certainly true of the 'Marionberry', which is vigorous and has a season lasting about nine weeks, from July into September. It is probably a blackberry, but the taste is actually more like loganberry. The 'Sunberry' also crops for a long time. It's a bit too rampant for most gardens, but it's worth trying if size

isn't an issue. If you have unlimited space, the 'Silvanberry' from Australia might be the one for you. This is very vigorous, at least twice the size of others, but the fruits, which ripen in August, are large and sweet and the disease-resistant plants grow well in heavy soils.

The list of berries is growing almost as fast as the plants themselves. Although not related to this group, two more to watch out for are the 'Worcesterberry' — actually a type of gooseberry with small black fruit and savage thorns — and the Jostaberry, a blackcurrant/gooseberry cross. Where will it end?

● *Andy Sturgeon's book Planted (Hodder & Stoughton £20) will be published on October 1*

● *Dan Pearson will return next week*

CUTTINGS

● Next week there will be a special Gardener's Weekend at Audley End House near Saffron Walden, Essex. As well as a range of plants for sale, there will be demonstrations and a craft fair (details: 01799-522399).

● The Ryton Organic Garden near Coventry in Warwickshire is home to the National Centre of Organic Gardening and is well worth a visit at any time. The new cook's garden, where everything grown is edible, opens on Friday (details: 01203-303517).

● The warm, wet weather earlier this summer looks set to result in a slug invasion of epidemic proportions. Already garden centres around the country are reporting that some biological controls have sold out. If you are up to your neck in gastropods, try using cocoa shell mulch around tender plants — slugs seem to hate the smell.

● Kiftsgate Court, near Chipping Campden in Gloucestershire, is perched high on a hill overlooking the Vale of Evesham. The small three-acre site is a riot of colour with hydrangeas and magnificent old roses — including a climber, *Rosa filipes* 'Kiftsgate', planted in 1938 and now more than 50ft high — as well as Japanese maples in the autumn (details: 01386-438777).

● Do you know where I can obtain a copy of Lutyens's garden seat, the bench that was designed for the garden of Little Thakeham?

Shirley Gillyon, Wing, Buckinghamshire

Now a hotel, Little Thakeham is a magnificent, recently restored Lutyens house near Storrington in West Sussex (01903-744416). The garden itself was designed by the original owner, Tom Blackburn, who chose plants for the beauty of their names rather than their looks. Andrew Crace can supply a copy of the Lutyens seat as well as a number of other classic benches. Call 01279-842685 for a catalogue.

Robert Johnston

● If you want to find particular garden accessories or services, write to Cuttings, Style Section, The Sunday Times, 1 Pennington Street, London E1 9XW