

# MOLES SEEDS

## Fruit

Cultural Leaflet: ZZ450

On arrival, remove all plants from the packaging and check that the plants are in good condition. If the plants are dry, for bare rooted plants, place the roots in water for 20 minutes. For potted varieties, water well.

If the soil conditions are unsuitable for immediate planting out, the plants can be stored in a frost free shed or alternatively heel into the garden (temporarily planted in a shallow hole making sure the roots are covered) until conditions improve.

To get the best from your plants it is worth taking a little time to prepare the soil, as once planted, they will occupy the same spot for a number of years. Choose a sheltered sunny site and prepare the soil by digging in a good amount of organic matter, such as well rotted manure or garden compost. Take care to remove any perennial weeds which may cause problems in the future.

It is advisable to provide a fruit cage or netting to stop birds getting to the fruit.

### Blackberries

Space rows 8ft apart with a distance between plants of 8ft. Blackberries are vigorous plants and should be supported with wires of 3, 4, 5 and 6ft against walls and fences, or free standing frame.

Blackberries fruit on the previous season's growth and new growth is either trained by staking along the ground in either direction or is grown along the top wire.

After fruiting, the old growth is removed and the new growth is tied onto the wires often in a weaving pattern. To get the long growths required to get the best yields from the plants, a fertiliser of high nitrogen content is recommended during March, and again during May-June.

### Blackcurrants

Space the plants 5ft apart, with 6ft between rows. Dig a hole large enough to spread out the roots and deep enough so that the area where the branches fork is at soil level or so that the old soil mark is about 2in below the soil level.

Each branch should then be pruned back to 2 buds or 1-2in above the soil level. After the first growing season remove any weak shoots and cut one of the strongest shoots back to the base of the bush. In following seasons trim to keep the shape of the bush by removing any shoots growing out at more than 45° to the vertical.

Once the bush is established (approximately 3-4 years), cut back three to four of the oldest branches to a strong side shoot or to

the base of the bush. Frost protection may be needed during the flowering period and the fruit will need protection from birds.

Pick the fruit about a week after it has turned blue/black. Apply a general fertiliser in March and mulch around the plants during April.

### Blueberries and cranberries

Blueberries and cranberries require free-draining, gritty soil which is rich in organic matter to thrive. They also prefer an acid soil, with a pH of less than 4.5 for cranberries and 5.5 for blueberries. The pH of the soil can be reduced by incorporating sulphur. Can also be container-grown - use ericaceous compost and fertiliser.

Space the plants 5ft apart, with 5ft between rows. Dig a hole large enough to take the rootball and plant to the same level as it was in the pot.

Maintain an open habit by winter pruning to encourage good circulation of air and thereby reducing disease problems.

### Gooseberries and Redcurrants

Space the plants 5ft apart, with 5ft between rows. Dig a hole large enough to spread out the roots and deep enough to cover no more than the first third of the stem or to the old soil mark.

Any suckers or dormant buds on the under ground stem should be removed and any branches less than 6in above the soil mark should also be removed. Subsequent pruning is aimed at making an open and airy, cup shaped bush with an open centre, which reduces the chances of disease and makes picking easier. Remove any branches which do not form the required shape after planting and the remaining branches should be cut back by a third to a left or right facing bud. This should be repeated each winter until the plant has reached the required size.

In subsequent years the leading shoots from the main branches should then be cut back to half their length to an upward facing bud for a spreading variety like Invicta or a downward facing bud for upright varieties. Shoots from the main branches should be pruned during late June to half their length and then pruned back to two or three buds during the winter.

Both gooseberries and redcurrants produce suckers which need to be removed by pulling rather than cutting in June or July.

Apply a general fertiliser in March and mulching will help to suppress weeds and suckers. Winter protection against birds may be needed to prevent damage to buds.



## Raspberries

Space rows 6ft apart, and dig a trench 9in wide and 3in deep, spacing the canes 18in apart within the trench. Spread out the roots and cover with soil, firming well. Traditionally, summer fruiting canes are cut down to approximately 9in above the soil surface on planting, whilst autumn fruiting canes can be left as they are and pruned down to soil level by the end of the winter.

Once summer fruiting raspberries have finished producing fruit, the canes which bore the fruit need to be removed down to ground level. The strongest growing new canes which will produce fruit the following year need to be tied into the support, whilst weaker canes should be removed. Autumn fruiting canes produce fruit on the current season's canes and all the growth simply needs cutting down to soil level during the winter.

To get the best from your raspberries keep weed free and dress regularly with a compound fertiliser according to the manufacturers instructions.

## Rhubarb

An ideal low maintenance crop, and popular for plant and crown sales. The use of one-year-old crowns will speed up the time from crop establishment to first harvest, and will provide a crop in the second year, from March onwards. Spacing 60-120cm x 90-150cm. 5,000-18,000 plants per hectare.

Rhubarb can also be grown from seed - sow February to April (50-80 seeds per gram), germinate between 10-30°C. Keep re-potting the developing plants until large enough for sale / planting.

## Strawberries

Strawberry plants prefer the soil to be firm but not compacted, this can be achieved by gently treading the soil surface. The plants should be spaced 12-15in apart in rows 2.5-3ft apart. Use a trowel to open a slit 6in deep and place the plant in the slit so that the crown is level with the soil surface and all the roots hang down into the slit. Ease the soil back around the plant and firm well.

Keep the strawberry bed weed free by hand or by using a hoe. Once berries start to develop in May and June, place straw under the fruit and around the plants, which will help to suppress weeds and keep the fruit clean. If straw is unavailable, black plastic sheeting makes a good alternative. Protect developing fruit from birds by covering with netting. Pick strawberries by the stalk to prevent bruising the fruit.

Once harvest is over, the old leaves can be removed using shears, taking care not to damage the plant crown, which will rapidly produce new leaves. Any leaf debris and straw should be removed and either composted or burnt to keep the strawberry bed healthy and vigorous. Feed with a compound fertiliser according to the manufacturer's instructions.

## Tayberries

Space rows 6-7ft apart with a distance between plants of 8ft. Tayberries are fairly vigorous plants, although less vigorous than blackberries, and should be supported with wires at heights of 3, 4, 5 and 6ft against walls and fences, or a free-standing frame.

Tayberries fruit on the previous year's growth. After fruiting, the old growth is removed and the new growth is tied onto the wires. To get the long growths required for the best yields, a fertiliser of high nitrogen content is recommended during March and again during May-July.

## Wineberries

Closely related to the raspberry, this climbing shrub produces large trusses of orange-red to dark red berries. Exceptionally sweet flavour. Canes are covered in attractive soft red bristles, making it both productive and ornamental.

Crops on second year's growth, treat as tayberries.

*Information provided for guidance only, as cultural practices and climatic circumstances vary.*

(12/15)