

## Fall Fruit Harvesting

As we head into the end of the growing season, we can expect our first frost soon. We still have time to enjoy a fall harvest of raspberries and a wide variety of apples.

There are two types of raspberry plants—summer bearing and fall bearing. If you have fall bearing raspberries, now is the time to keep up on regularly picking the ripe fruit. They should continue to bear fruit until the first killing frost. Keeping ripe fruit picked will lessen your problems with small black and orange picnic beetles and sugar-seeking bees and wasps.

After that first frost, you can treat your fall-bearing raspberries in one of two ways. Your first choice is to cut all the canes back to the ground. Next year, the roots will sprout new canes, which will produce a fall crop.

Your second choice is to leave the canes for now and thin them out or cut them back by about one quarter while they are dormant this winter. This method will provide you with a small crop of raspberries in the early summer on the old canes, followed by a bigger crop on new canes next fall. However, your fall crop will not be as big as your fall crop would be if you follow the first option and cut all the canes back to the ground this year.

If you want a large fall crop, it's best to manage your patch by cutting all the canes off after the first frost. If you want some berries in June as well, plant a few summer bearing plants next to your fall bearing ones.

If you have an apple tree or trees with apples that have turned red, the easiest way to tell when they are ready to harvest is to taste them! One bite will tell you if they are sweet and juicy. If they are still not ripe, they will have a starchy or sour taste and be a bit hard and dry. For fresh use, pick apples at their peak.

If you want to store apples, pick them about a week before they are fully ripe. Sort out any bruised or damaged fruit—it's true, one bad apple can spoil the whole bunch! Damaged fruit gives off ethylene gas, which speeds ripening and rotting of other fruit.

Ideal storage temperature is 34-38 degrees. Put apples in vented plastic bags to keep them from drying out and shriveling. The vents are important to allow oxygen in for the fruit.

Apples will pick up flavors and smells from vegetables such as broccoli, onions, cabbage, cauliflower and potatoes, so store apples away from those crops. It's difficult to grow a great apple crop without some disease control and spraying. If you had a lot of fungal problems on your apples this year, you're not alone. With all the rain and moisture we had this year, fungi were very happy! Plan ahead for next year, as spraying needs to start as soon as things warm up.

For more information on growing apples and raspberries, contact your county Extension office.