



John Burgess/The Press Democrat

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ADVICE TO GROW BY » MASTER GARDENERS **Protect vulnerable succulents after rain and Pruning raspberries**

Question: How do I care for my succulents after a rainstorm?

Answer: Succulents are adapted to survive in semiarid climates. If they stay wet, they're quickly compromised by rainstorms. The best remedy is to get out into your garden and assess the situation.

One way to check the condition of each succulent is the "squish test." If the leaves are translucent and pale and feel squishy, remove them. Be sure to check the stem of the plant; if it's firm and not discolored, the plant is healthy. If it feels soft and has turned black, the roots are damaged and you should discard the plant.

If your succulents look like they suffered some damage but the main stem isn't affected, dig up the plant and remove all the parts that feel squishy. Leave the plant out of the ground (but protected from rain) for several days to dry out, and then replant it.

Also look for any fallen wet leaves that may be resting on top of the rosettes on plants like agave and aloe. Wet leaves cause fungal disease and rot; you need to remove them right away.

Look for areas in your garden that have puddles of water and avoid planting succulents there in the future. Remember to plant succulents high, on mounded, fast-draining soil.

If your succulents are in pots that are flush with the ground, check that the drainage holes aren't plugged with mud. If the holes in the bottom of the pots are clogged, remove the mud and set the pots slightly above ground to facilitate drainage. Avoid putting gravel or shards of pottery in the bottom of containers; the rocks hinder water movement, contributing to root decay and rot.

For more information on caring for succulents, visit: Succulent care: <https://bit.ly/3dzSw2N>

Succulents and other low-water- use plants: <https://bit.ly/3dvj9WK>

The Myth of drainage material in container plantings: <https://bit.ly/3EFGWzm>

Question: We recently moved to Sonoma County, and our new property has several mature raspberry vines. My neighbors tell me the vines should be pruned regularly. How and when should I prune them?

Answer: Pruning is vital to keep your raspberry vines healthy while improving fruit quality and yield. How you prune your raspberries depends on the variety. In general, raspberries are grouped by fruit color — red, black, purple or golden — and the time of year they bear fruit, either the summer or fall.

Summer-bearing raspberries are the red, golden, purple and black varieties, and some red raspberry varieties are fall-bearing. If you don't know which you have, check out the Oregon State University Extension Service publication on raspberries at <https://bit.ly/3aMR6Rt>. It has color photos of most raspberry varieties.

For all varieties, remove dead or diseased canes whenever you see them by cutting them down at the base of the plant. Dead or diseased canes have brittle, gray, peeling bark. You can put dead canes in your compost pile, but dispose of all diseased plant material in your municipal trash bin.

During the summer, improve light penetration and air circulation in your raspberry patch by removing all new canes that emerge outside a row that's ideally 12-18 inches wide. When you remove them, dig up the canes by the roots. As long as they are disease-free, you can pot them up for friends or replant them in another location. They will produce fruit next year.

In winter, when raspberries are dormant, remove all but the thickest, most vigorous canes, leaving five to six canes per foot in a row.

Golden raspberries are cultivars of the red summer-bearing variety, so the same pruning rules apply. After harvest, remove all the old canes that bore fruit by cutting them down to the ground. You can spot them by the dead stems that once held fruit. Shorten all remaining canes to about 6 feet.

In late spring or early summer during the growing season, top black and purple varieties to about 2 to 3 feet. This encourages lateral branching and increases yield fourfold, and makes it easier for you to reach your berries. After harvest, cut down the canes that bore fruit to the ground. Also shorten the lateral branches of all remaining canes to 8-10 inches for black raspberries and 12-14 inches for purple varieties.

After harvesting fall-bearing red raspberries, cut all the canes down to the base. However, you can get a second crop by leaving the canes that produced fruit. The following winter, remove only the dead tips of the canes you left, making your cut well into green tissue. An early-summer crop will emerge from the lower portion of those canes, but they will not reproduce again that season. Prune them to the ground after harvest.

For more information on growing berries in your backyard and on the North Coast, go to <https://bit.ly/3jgRkET> and <https://bit.ly/2ZarnQt>.

Contributors to this week's column were Patricia Decker, Karen Felker, Anne Lowings and Patricia Rosales. Send your gardening questions to scmqpd@gmail.com.