

What do I do with my raspberries this winter? I noticed a lot of the big growers are pruning their raspberries right now, what do I do with mine?

This is indeed the time that most raspberry growers do their pruning operations and the reasons are several. At this time of year, labor is more available, there are virtually no other operations happening in the field and lastly the canes in most cases are fully dormant and many of the carbohydrates have descended out of the canes and into the crown, where they will serve the following crop.

Growers of smaller acreages and gardens should also follow this lead and also prune now, before the raspberry plants begin to grow again. Your question is actually very common and one that this office handles quite often.

The rule of thumb to follow for pruning raspberries is that fruited cane will no longer produce and as a matter of fact is dead. As it is no longer productive, this cane should be removed, as it will be a source of disease as well as clutter the hedgerow. Pruning of raspberries is not like that of fruit trees. The desired length of cane is simply removed, the further trimming of laterals or branches is not necessary. Note that fruited cane might be only a portion of a single cane, so proper pruning in this case would remove only the fruited top. In other cases, and generally this is true for many of the primocane bearing varieties such as Caroline and Heritage, the whole cane (usually the upper three quarters of the cane) has produced fruit and it should be removed in its entirety.

Additionally, many growers like to trim off the cane at an angle rather than horizontal to the sky, since the angle will allow water to flow off and not collect and serve as a site of disease infestation.

The above has been a brief guide to pruning and managing raspberries on the Central Coast of California. Please contact Mark Bolda at UCCE Santa Cruz if you have more questions on this topic or any other topics concerning blackberry, raspberry or strawberry production.