

Getting the most out of your raspberry soil test report

- Be certain your soil pH is in the optimal range.
- Add a nitrogen (N) source at the recommended rate and time.
- Add a phosphorus (P) or potassium (K) source only if soil test levels are low.

General Information

When planted and managed properly many cultivars can be successfully grown in New York State. Choose a site with full sun and good drainage. Begin improving the soil the year before planting especially if the pH needs adjusting. Plant in early spring in soil where no strawberries, brambles or crops in the tomato family have been grown for several years.

Soil pH in the 5.5 - 6.5 range is ideal for growing raspberries.

When soil pH is outside this optimal range and low, lime can be mixed in to raise soil pH. Sulfur is used to lower soil pH.

The recommended rate of material should be mixed into the upper 4 to 6 inches of soil. To avoid harming plant roots and to provide the necessary time for the material to adjust the pH throughout the root zone, it is best to mix liming or acidifying material into the soil one year before planting if possible.

When a large amount of material is recommended, such as 20 pounds of lime per 100 square feet, mix half in the spring and the other half in the fall before planting.

Wood ashes are not used as an amendment to improve soil physical properties. However, they can be used to raise soil pH in place of lime, just apply double the rate. Avoid applying both lime and wood ashes which can raise the soil pH beyond the optimum range of 5.5 - 6.5. When using wood ashes as a lime substitute, be sure to incorporate them into the upper 4 to 6 inches of soil in advance of seeding or transplanting. Do not apply more than 10 lbs. of wood ashes per 100 square feet to avoid raising the pH above the optimum range.

Promote plant health, increase yield, and save money with proper fertilizer applications.

Nutrients required by raspberry plants in the highest quantity are nitrogen (N), potassium (K) and phosphorus (P). Other essential nutrients are usually available in adequate quantities when the pH is in the optimal range. There is no benefit to applying more fertilizer than plants require. In fact, over application of nutrients may be harmful to plant growth and the environment.

Fertilizer Sources

Organic matter is added to the soil to improve soil properties by increasing the water and nutrient holding capacity, improving aeration and drainage, feeding microorganisms and providing some nutrients. Common organic matter sources include composted manure, peat moss, plant-based compost and plant and animal by-products.

Animal manures and plant-based compost (yard waste, grass clippings, food waste) are readily available and popular amendments and fertilizers commonly considered as **natural organic**.

Nutrient content of composted products will vary depending on the source (plant or animal), moisture content, how it was stored and how long it was composted. Weed seeds, a high salt content and pathogens might be a problem with fresh manure or other organic materials if they are not fully composted. Knowing the nutrient and salt content of your compost or manure pile would add precision to application rates for a given site. However, this would require testing every time one of the above variables changes, making this impractical and cost prohibitive for the average gardener.

The nutrient analysis of commercially available manure and compost is found on the bag. Keep in mind these products may also have a high salt content and only 5 to 20% of the nitrogen will be available to the plants during the first year of application.

Only mix in manure or other materials that are fully composted. Fully composted manure has aged for at least 6 to 9 months. Incorporate into the upper 4 to 6 inches of soil before and to minimize runoff.

More about organic matter

Annually replenishing organic matter to improve soil health is a common practice. Sandy soils with an organic matter content of 2-2½% and clayey soils with 3-5% organic matter will perform fine. **Organic matter levels twice this amount could lead to nutrient imbalances.**

Too much of a good thing? *If a regular soil test indicates nutrient levels exceed crop needs, limit compost applications to promote healthy soil for plant success.*

Inorganic fertilizers are compounds that are chemically synthesized from basic raw materials, isolated from naturally occurring sources or mined materials that provide

nutrients. They are less expensive and have a higher nutrient content. They are water-soluble and are quickly available to plants, easy to apply and especially useful in cool weather.

Care should be taken however, when using *water-soluble fertilizer* sources because they are made of salts that can burn plants. Also if over applied and watered in excessively they can leach beyond the root zone and end up in the ground water which impacts water quality negatively.

The nutrient content (fertilizer analysis) is required on every bag of commercially available fertilizer. The first number indicates the *percent* of nitrogen (N), the second number is the percent of phosphate (P₂O₅) a source of phosphorus, and the third number is the percent of potash (K₂O) a source of potassium. They are simply referred to as N-P-K. A 50 lb. bag of 5-10-5 contains 2½ lbs. of N, 5 lbs. of P₂O₅ and 2½ lbs. of K₂O. The rest of the material is made up of other inert material, such as sand or clay granules to help spread the fertilizer.

When nitrogen (N), phosphorus (P) and potassium (K) are all needed, a *complete fertilizer* that contains all 3 nutrients, for example: 10-10-10, 5-10-5, or 5-10-10, can be used.

Timing and Fertilizer Rates

Pre-plant fertilizer practices:

Nitrogen (N) is *not applied* before planting. However, newly planted raspberry plants should receive 1-1½ ounces of nitrogen per 100 square feet about 4 weeks after planting and again in August. See **Table A**.

Make application	Ounces (oz.) of Nitrogen per 100 feet of row	Calcium Nitrate 15-0-0	Urea 46-0-0	Ammonium nitrate 33-0-0	Blood Meal 12-0-0	Cottonseed Meal 6-2-1
4 weeks after planting	1 - 1½ oz.	6½ - 8½ oz.	2.0 - 2¾ oz.	3.0 - 4 oz.	8- 11 oz.	16½ - 21½ oz.
In August	1 - 1½ oz.	8½ - 13 oz.	2¾ - 4 oz.	4.0 - 6 oz.	11- 16½ oz.	21½ - 33 oz.

Use higher rate for sandier soils

Phosphorus (P) is important in early root development and improves the quality of fruits.

Phosphorus does not move much in the soil. It is best to incorporate P before planting. Mix fertilizer into the upper 4 to 6 inches of the soil where root growth is most active.

If only P is needed, use **Table B** to help determine the amount of phosphorus fertilizer to apply. If the planting is already established, select a water-soluble fertilizer with a high percentage of P and apply according to label directions.

Be careful. Animal manures, fresh and composted, often contain high levels of P. Regularly adding manure to gardens can raise soil P to excessive levels.

Note: Once raspberry plants are established, they rarely will benefit from additional phosphorus.

Table B: Soil test levels and pre-plant phosphorus recommendations for raspberry plants					
Soil test report levels	Ounces of phosphate (P₂O₅) to apply per 100 sq. ft. prior to planting	Some fertilizer sources that contain phosphorus (notice the concentration differs for each so the amount to apply differs)			
		Inorganic fertilizers		Organic fertilizers	
		Super-phosphate 0-20-0	Triple Super-phosphate 0-46-0	Bone Meal 1-15-0 also contains N	Rock phosphate 0-3-0
		20% P₂O₅	46% P₂O₅	15% P₂O₅	3% P₂O₅
		Quickly available	Quickly available	Slowly available	Slowly available
Amount of product to apply per 100 square feet					
Very low	3¼ oz.	1 lb.	7 oz.	1⅓ lbs.	6¾ lbs.
Low	2.0 oz.	10 oz.	4⅓ oz.	13 oz.	4 lbs.
Medium	1 oz.	5 oz.	2¼ oz.	6½ oz.	2 lbs.
High	0	0	0	0	0

Potassium (K) increases water efficiency, improves stress tolerance and the quality of fruit.

Pre-plant incorporation of K is the most effective way to get enough K into the soil system when soil test indicates a less than optimum level. Surface applications are of limited value for a short-term crop like strawberries.

When only potassium is needed note the soil test level and select a potassium fertilizer source and apply at the recommended rate.

See **Table C**. Use the **higher bolded rate** if the soil is sandy (coarse-textured). Lower rates apply to fine-textured soils with more clay.

Keep in mind that wood ashes contain potassium (3-7% K₂O) and if used supplemental K will not likely be needed.

Table C: Soil test levels and pre-plant potassium recommendations for raspberry plants				
Soil test report levels	Ounces of Potash (K₂O) to apply per 100 sq. ft. prior to planting	Some fertilizer sources that contain potassium (K)		
		Inorganic fertilizers	Organic fertilizers	
		Potash 0-0-60	Kelp 1-0-2 also contains N	Greensand
		60% K₂O	2% K₂O	7% K₂O
		Quickly available	Quickly available	Very slowly available
Very low	2 - 3¼ oz.	3 oz. - 5½ oz.	6¼ lbs. - 10 lbs.	1¾ lbs. - 3 lbs.
Low	1½ - 2½ oz.	2½ oz. - 4 oz.	4½ lbs. - 7¾ lbs.	1⅓ lbs. - 2¼ lbs.
Medium	1 - 1½ oz.	1½ oz. - 2½ oz.	3 lbs. - 4½ lbs.	1 lb. - 1⅓ lbs.
High	0	0	0	0

Note: Once raspberry plants are established, they rarely will benefit from additional potassium.

Use the **higher bolded rate** if the soil is sandy (coarse-textured). Lower rates apply to fine-textured soils with more clay.

Fertilizing Raspberry Plantings:

Nitrogen (N)

The nitrogen content of a soil sample does not necessarily reflect the future availability of nitrogen because unlike phosphorus and potassium, the nitrogen level will fluctuate depending on biological activity and soil conditions. Nitrogen is one of the most important nutrients for plant growth and is needed in relatively large amounts by all plants. Specific application rates and timing can be found in **Table D for Summer Fruiting raspberries** and in **Table E for Fall Fruiting raspberries**. Use **higher rate** on sandier soils.

Summer fruiting raspberries

Table D: Approximate nitrogen rates, sources and timing for summer fruiting raspberries							
Age of Planting	Ounces (oz.) of Nitrogen per 100 feet of row	Make application	Calcium Nitrate 15-0-0	Urea 46-0-0	Ammonium nitrate 33-0-0	Blood Meal 12-0-0	Cottonseed Meal 6-2-1
0	1 – 1½ oz.*	4 weeks after planting	6½ - 8½ oz.	2.0 – 2¾ oz.	3.0 – 4 oz.	8- 11 oz.	16½ - 21½ oz.
1	1⅓ - 2.0 oz.*	May or Split between May and June	8½ - 13 oz.	2¾ – 4 oz.	4.0 – 6 oz.	11- 16½ oz.	21½ - 33 oz.
2+	1½ - 2¾ oz.*	May or Split between May and June	10 - 18⅓ oz.	3¼ – 6 oz.	4½ – 8⅓ oz.	12½ - 23 oz.	25 – 45¾ oz.

Fall Fruiting Raspberries

Table E: Approximate nitrogen rates, sources and timing for fall fruiting raspberries							
Age of Planting	Ounces (oz.) of Nitrogen per 100 feet of row	Make application	Calcium Nitrate 15-0-0	Urea 46-0-0	Ammonium nitrate 33-0-0	Blood Meal 12-0-0	Cottonseed Meal 6-2-1
0*	1 ounce	4 weeks after planting and in August	6½ oz.	2.0 oz.	3.0 oz.	8 oz.	16½ oz.
1	1¾ – 2¾ oz.*	Split between May and June	11½ - 18⅓ oz.	3¾ – 6 oz.	5⅓ – 8⅓ oz.	14½– 23 oz.	29- 45¾ oz.
2+	2½ – 3¾ oz.*	Split between May and June	16½ - 25 oz.	5.5 – 8 oz.	7½ – 11⅓ oz.	21- 31¼ oz.	41½ - 62 ½ oz.

* use higher nitrogen rate on sandier soils

Fertilizer application tips for established raspberry plantings:

Do not work fertilizer into the soil. It may damage roots.

Sidedressing refers to the addition of fertilizer during the growing season. Apply the side dress fertilizer 2 to 4 inches from the growing plant to avoid contact with green plant tissue, lightly rake into the soil and then water it in to move fertilizer through soil to where roots are growing.

[For more gardening information visit Cornell Garden-Based Learning website:](http://gardening.cals.cornell.edu/garden-guidance)

<http://gardening.cals.cornell.edu/garden-guidance>

[For more information on growing fruit:](http://gardening.cals.cornell.edu/garden-guidance/foodgarden/#Growing%20Fruit)

<http://gardening.cals.cornell.edu/garden-guidance/foodgarden/#Growing%20Fruit>

[For more information on growing raspberries:](http://gardening.cals.cornell.edu/files/2015/12/6brambles-2a0n2a7.pdf)

<http://gardening.cals.cornell.edu/files/2015/12/6brambles-2a0n2a7.pdf>