**Easy Fruits for our Landscapes**

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Are you looking for a fruit that you can grow without a spray program? Consider blackberries.

Blackberries produce their fruit in late spring (May and June) on vines that grow well in raised beds or even in native soils. Most area nurseries have blackberries in 1 gallon containers for transplanting or they can even be planted as a bare root.

Recommended varieties that have done well in our area for years include Brazos and Roseborough. A relatively new variety, Kiowa, has outperformed Brazos and Roseborough in test trials. Any of the three selections will perform well.

Blackberries do have several challenging characteristics to consider. The stems are thorny. The old stems should be removed each year after the fruit is harvested. Fruit is produced on new wood. If the old stems are not removed, the bed can become a tangled mess and it can become unpleasant to harvest the fruit. Blackberries also spread aggressively. Control the spread by removing stems that appear outside the designated bed.

There are thornless blackberries that have been developed in Arkansas. Varieties such as Navaho and Arapaho are thornless. Unfortunately, in my experience, the thornless varieties are later blooming and seem to decline after a few years in our hot summers.