



BERRIES... ...FOR BREAKFAST



With June just ahead of us, thoughts have turned to the production of soft fruit in the garden, writes garden designer Teresa Potter

Berries, currants and grapes will all grow in a spot of Lancashire sunshine if you provide the right conditions and carefully select the variety best suited to cooler temperatures.

Many catalogues highlight varieties able to cope with less than perfect growing conditions, making a successful choice much easier.

There are many opportunities to incorporate your favourite berry bearing plant into the garden. Alpine strawberries can be used as an edging to a border or grown in a wall basket. They readily produce runners so it is easy to increase stocks without having to purchase further plants. The tiny fruits are full of flavour and you only need a few to complement a bowl of breakfast cereal or a dessert. If you prefer the more traditional large

sweet strawberries then try the 'chef's favourite' and grow Marades Bois – widely accepted as the strawberry with the best flavour and texture. It is easy to grow and crops well. Fruits will ripen from mid-June onwards depending on the season.

Use raspberry canes to create a hedge – they will grow in full sun or light shade and are not too fussy about the soil as long



as it drains well. It's possible to choose varieties that will fruit in the summer or autumn. Summer fruiting varieties produce fruit on the previous season's growth and require canes that have borne fruit to be pruned out in August or September. Autumn fruiting varieties produce a crop on the current season's growth and require all canes to be pruned down to ground level in late winter.

Blueberries are often considered to be a little exotic but given acidic soil, a sheltered position in the sun along with plenty of rain, they will do as well as other soft fruit. Perfect for containers, they form attractive bushes that will decorate a sunny terrace with spring flowers, summer fruit and autumn leaf colour. Remember to plant at least two bushes to allow for cross pollination, this results in a more abundant crop of larger fruit. Allowing them to ripen on the

bush will give the sweetest flavour.

Blackberry Oregon Thornless is a good choice for a smaller garden as it has a compact habit and having no thorns, makes pruning much easier.



The shiny black fruits ripen from August onwards and its attractive green foliage turns in autumn to give an added splash of colour. All fruits are a treat for birds so providing some protection is essential if you fancy a few for yourself.

Patience is the key to success. Don't expect a great crop in year one, however well tended plants will provide a bumper harvest for many years giving you the opportunity to harvest fruit ripened on the plant for the very best flavour – a luxury commercial growers cannot afford, which is the best reason for growing your own. ■