

Rubus idaeus

[Synonyms : *Rubus idaeus* subsp. *vulgatus*]

RASPBERRY is a prickly deciduous shrub. Native to Europe (including Britain and Iceland) and to Asia, it has small white flowers.

It is also known as American red raspberry, Arnberry, Bramble of Mount Ida, *Červená malina* (Czech), Common European raspberry, Common red raspberry, European raspberry, European red raspberry, *Framboise* (French), *Framboos* (Dutch), *Frambuesa* (Spanish), *Frambueso* (Spanish), Garden raspberry, *Hallon* (Swedish), *Himbeere* (German), *Himbeerstrauch* (German), Hindberry, *Lampine* (Italian), *Lampone* (Italian), *Mafonen* (Welsh), *Malina* (Czech, Slovak), *Maliní* (Czech), *Maliník* (Czech), *Maliník obecný* (Czech), *Ostružina malina* (Slovak), *Ostružiník maliník* (Czech), Rasp, Raspbis, Red raspberry, *Rubuso Ida* (Esperanto), *Sivven*, *Vadelma* (Finnish), Wild raspberry, Wood rasp, and *Zmeur* (Rumanian); and in flower language is said to be a symbol of envy, human heart, misery, and remorse (blossom).

Warning – the tannins in raspberry tea can cause stomach upsets and some authorities suggest long term use might be a factor in the development of nasal and oral cancer.

Idaeus means ‘of or from Mount Ida on the island of Crete (or occasionally of or from Asia Minor)’.

According to some authorities the English name Raspberry commemorates a sweet French red wine called *raspis*.

A version of one Greek legend tells how the nymph, Ida, picked white raspberries for her charge, the young Zeus and pricked her finger while gathering them. Thereupon the raspberries turned red.

The raspberry (wild) has been eaten since prehistoric times. Fossilized plant fragments have been found by archaeologists in the Swiss lake villages at Robenhausen that date back to about 8000 BC – and in Danish sites of a similar period. Remains have also been found in Iron Age sites (about 500-51 BC) in England.

There was limited cultivation of raspberries in the Middle Ages and the methods used so improved that by 1866 the United States alone had 41 identified varieties. But cultivation on a large scale was still not seen until the 20th Century.

Apart from domestic use the fruit provide a commercial ingredient today for the food industry (not least for jams and syrups) and for the drinks industry for for example juices, soft drinks or teas and for liqueurs such as the French *Framboise*.

Various North American Indian tribes ate the fruit including some of the Algonkin, the Koyukon, Abnaki, Thompson, some of the Tanana, the Bella Coola, some of the Cree, the Cherokee and the Okanagan-Colville. Alaskans also ate them. They and some of the Tanana Indians made the berries into preserves and jam – and the Thompson and Bella Coola tribes made jam with them too. Some of the Algonkin tribe and the Thompson Indians preserved the fruit in other ways as well. Thompson Indians made steamed and dried fruit into little cakes, and some of the Tanana Indians and also the Inupiat Inuits picked the fruit for making puddings. Okanagan-Colville Indians and some of the Tanana stored the fruit for Winter food, and some of the Cree Indian tribe ate the young shoots.

Iroquois Indians used the shrub to treat their cows, and various parts of it were also used by many tribes (including some of the Algonkin) for human medicine.

Among the Iroquois, Okanagan-Colville and Cherokee tribes the plant was used as a purgative. Iroquois and Cherokee used it to cause vomiting, the Menominee Indians used the root for flavouring medicines, and Iroquois Indians prescribed it as a stimulant. The Cherokee and Iroquois Indians took it as a tonic. For some of the Algonkin and also the Okanagan-Colville it offered a cure for diarrhoea, Cherokee Indians turned to it for bowel disorders, and the Iroquois and some of the Algonkin valued it for urinary problems. It was an Iroquois remedy for liver and kidney ailments, and the Cherokee and some of the Cree used it during childbirth. Cherokee coughs were eased by chewing the root, and the Iroquois included it as an ingredient in a treatment for venereal disease. While the latter valued it for treating period problems and blood disorders, some of the Cree respected the plant for handling heart ailments. It was taken by the Okanagan-Colville for wind, Cherokee Indians used it to treat rheumatism, they and the Iroquois applied it to skin problems, and Cree children were given it when teething.

Today the cosmetics industry uses raspberry in face-masks and it also provides an ingredient for the pharmaceutical industry.

Medicinally, it was used by herbalists for removing tartar from teeth and as a gargle for sore throats. They also used it for cleaning wounds, and for burns and scalds. But perhaps for centuries the raspberry has been best known medicinally even today for its ability to ease childbirth. For this it is usually recommended that raspberry leaf tea be drunk freely before and during confinement.

The blossom is the birthday flower for 15th October.