

Blackberries or Dewberries?

Published 3 years ago by Elizabeth Barrow



Do you know the difference? I'm tempted to say that if it's a wild, sweet-tasting purple berry that grows in a low bramble, it's a dewberry. If it's a cultivated, sweet-tasting purple berry that grows in a low bramble, it's a blackberry. But there really are small differences between the two.

The small wild berry we call "Dewberry" is usually much shorter and more prostrate than a true blackberry. It rarely grows more than 2 feet tall, unless it has found a fence to lean on. In addition to thorns or prickles, the reddish stems are adorned with small, fine red hairs. The fruit is larger than that of a wild blackberry but can be smaller than that of a cultivated blackberry.

True blackberries, on the other hand, are taller, with upright or arching branches. While they do have thorns, blackberries lack the fine hairs along their stems. When found growing wild in pastures or along fence-rows, the berries are small. Blackberries grown for their fruit and cultivated in a garden have much larger fruit, sometimes up to 2 inches long. While blackberries are naturally thorny, there are some rather new introductions that are thornless. Perhaps the most productive blackberry in our area is the thorny variety called "Kiowa." However, thornless varieties such as "Triple Crown" and "Ouachita" are also great plants for the garden, both of which feature large sweet fruits.

As for me, I am quite partial to dewberries and will fight through thickets of brambles, mosquitoes, chiggers and maybe even snakes to get them. Now that I've found a nice patch, I'm not telling where it is!