

# HARVEST *of the* MONTH

Seasonal snacks from garden to classroom

## BLACKBERRIES

— September, 2015 —



*Harvest of the Month is a great way for youth and their families to explore, taste and learn about seasonal vegetables and fruits - from the garden, in the classroom, on the plate.*

### FACTS & VARIETIES

Blackberries grow on long, woody and thorn-covered stems known as "brambles" or "canes." They are a member of the genus *Rubus* in the plant family Rosacea or "Rose," which contains hundreds of different species of berries and other plants.

Blackberries have one of the highest fiber contents of any other fruit. This high nutritional value is due to the structure of the berry, which is technically an "aggregate" fruit, meaning that each blackberry is actually a cluster of fruits or "drupelets" containing many seeds. Blackberries are native to sub-arctic Europe and grow in the northern temperate regions of the United States.

### HEALTH & NUTRITION

Blackberries are a particularly good source of:

Vitamin A  
Vitamin C  
Potassium  
Calcium  
Fiber

Blackberries are rich in antioxidants, which are known to have potential health benefits against cancer, aging, inflammation and neurological diseases. One compound in particular, Anthocyanin, that gives blackberries their glossy, dark color, is thought to protect the brain from stress and may even reduce the effects of age-related neurological conditions.

### COOKING & EATING

Fresh blackberries are delicious on their own but can also be a wonderful addition to yogurt, salads, jams, smoothies and baked goods. They also freeze well, which helps to preserve their nutritional value and taste. Just place berries on a flat surface in the freezer for a few hours (so they don't all clump together). Once frozen, they can be stored in any freezer container.

#### BLACKBERRY SMOOTHIE

1/2 cup blackberries (fresh or frozen)  
1/2 banana  
1/2 cup plain yogurt  
1/2 Tbs honey  
4 ice cubes

Combine ingredients in a blender. Blend until smooth.

### GROWING TIPS

Blackberries are particularly well suited to Virginia's mild climate and are in season from about July through September. Blackberries are a perennial shrub. The trailing vines or canes produce berries during their second year of growth, after which they are removed to promote new growth. A well cared for blackberry plant can produce fruit for up to 20 years. The Local Food Hub works with growers in our region that supply wholesale berries. There are also pick your own berry patches in our area.

[CITYSCHOOLYARDGARDEN.ORG](http://CITYSCHOOLYARDGARDEN.ORG)

*Harvest of the Month is a program that highlights a locally available crop each month by providing a fresh, healthy snack in all six Charlottesville Elementary Schools. Students also learn about the crop in their schoolyard garden and classroom. Information on crop growing, nutrition and preparation is shared with teachers and families. The goal of Harvest of the Month is to support healthy living skills that strengthen our youth and community.*



*City Schoolyard Garden is an independent non-profit organization that cultivates academic achievement, health, environmental stewardship and community engagement through garden-based, experiential learning.*