The Mysore Black Raspberry in Florida

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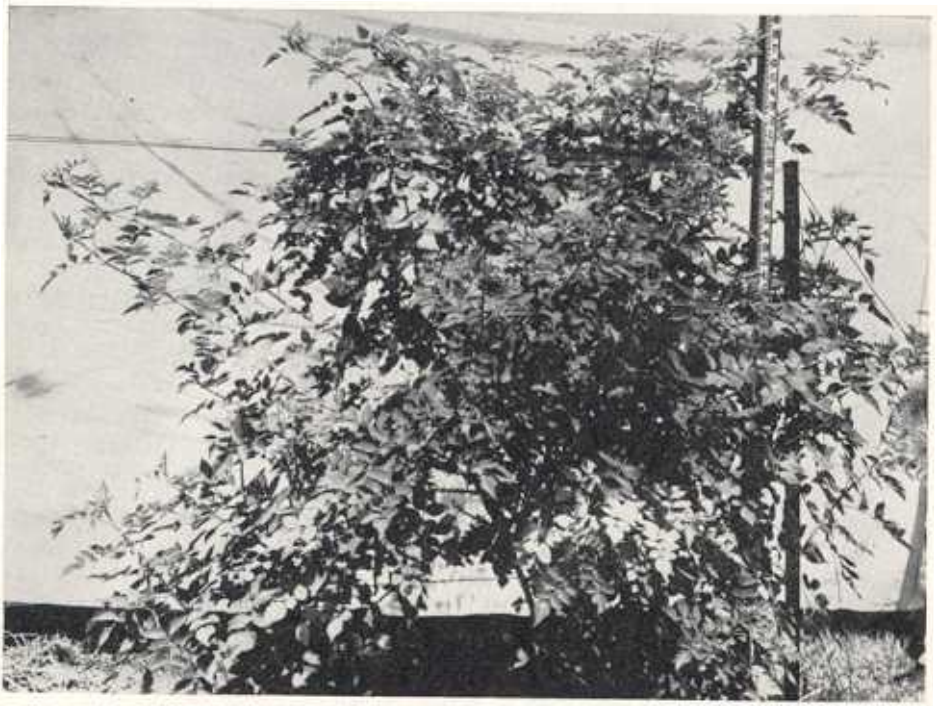
The tropical black raspberry, *Rubus albescens* (synonym *Rubus lasiocarpus*), is native to the mountains of India, Ceylon, Burma, and Java, where it grows at an elevation of 1,500 to 10,000 feet. It has been cultivated to a limited extent in India for many years and is known there as the Mysore, Ceylon, and Hill raspberry.

Until the introduction of the Mysore black raspberry a few years ago, no raspberry had been grown successfully in Florida. It was first introduced in the summer of 1948 from seeds sent to the University of Florida, Sub-Tropical Experiment Station, Homestead, by Mr. F. B. Harrington of Natal, South Africa. Mr. Harrington obtained his original seed in 1947, from the Closeburn Nursery in Kenya, East Africa. This nursery has offered the black raspberry for sale and Mr. H. Grahame Bell, the owner, states that it had been introduced into Kenya from India many years ago, and has become well established in the mountains of his country.

In the summer of 1949 seedlings were set in the field at the Sub-Tropical Experiment Station at Homestead, and the first fruiting took place in the winter of



(Photo by John C. Noonan)

Fig. 1. A Plant of the Mysore black raspberry, Rubus albescens, two years from seed, 15 months in the field.

1950. Selected plants were propagated and distributed to individuals throughout south and central Florida. These plantings were so successful and the demand for stock so great that the raspberry was released, and by the summer of 1952 many nurseries in South Florida were advertising the Mysore black raspberry for sale.

The plants have a typical raspberry-like growth (Fig. 1), producing canes from the crown or lower part of older stems. These long arching canes may grow 10-15 feet during the summer months. When pruned properly in late fall they will produce numerous short lateral branches which bear flowers and fruits during the winter and spring months. The leaves have five to nine, toothed, prominently veined leaflets which are white-hairy on the lower surface, and the young stems have a conspicuous white bloom. The stems, rachis, petiole, and midrib bear straight or hooked prickles. The flowers, which are ½ inch across and purplish-pink in color, are produced in terminal and axillary clusters on young lateral shoots. The fruit is up to three quarters of an inch in diameter, and when fully ripe is dark purple-black in color and covered with a fine bloom (Fig. 2). The fruit is juicy, mildly pleasant, slightly sweet, and has a good flavor.

The Mysore black raspberry has so far shown no evidence of seeding itself and becoming established in the wild in south Florida. It has been relatively free of fungus diseases and has seldom been bothered by insects and birds. Besides being a useful plant for home production and small scale commercial plantings, *Rubus albescens* might prove to be a good stock to use in a raspberry breeding program, especially when the objective is to obtain types that require only a short chilling period to induce flower formation. At the Sub-Tropical Experiment Station successful crosses have been made using the Mysore black raspberry and pollen of three varieties of red raspberry. The progeny of these crosses are now being studied.

(Photo by John C. Noonan)

Fig. 2. Fruit of the Mysore black raspberry, Rubus albescens.

Although this tropical black raspberry does not have chilling requirements, it is not sensitive to cold, short of freezing. It has tolerated temperatures of 32° F. of short duration, but any prolonged freezing weather will kill young, tender growth or, in extreme cases, kill the plant outright. It does not seem to be particular as to soil types, having grown well in the rocky alkaline soil of Dade County and in sandy, acid soils throughout the rest of Florida. It will not grow well in poorly drained soils—prolonged flooding or water-soaked soil have proved fatal.

Further information on the Mysore black raspberry may be obtained from the University of Florida, Sub-Tropical Experiment Station, Homestead, Florida.

We don't think that the Cauley variety of apple is worthy of the trouble of sending it out for testing. Our pomologists feel that they cannot recommend it for the reason that it is not as resistant to fire blight as was thought earlier.—W. S. Anderson, State College, Miss.