

Raspberry Bushy Dwarf Virus (RBDV)

Frequently Asked Questions

What are the symptoms of raspberry bushy dwarf?

The name of the virus is misleading as plants are not dwarfed or bushy. The bushy dwarf name originally came from a plant that was infected with multiple viruses. The most common symptom in red raspberry is crumbly fruit. Infected 'Meeker' also have reduced yield and shorter canes. Many varieties do not show any foliar (leaf) symptoms. Leaf samples from suspect plants can be tested for the presence of the virus at a laboratory. Refer to the BCMAF publication "Resources for Berry Growers" for a listing of laboratories that perform plant diagnoses and can test for viruses.

How does the virus spread?

The virus is found inside pollen grains. Raspberry is normally pollinated with insects so it is likely that the virus-infested pollen is spread by insects. It is not clear if the infection of bushes occurs via the pollination process or if there is a flower visiting insect (other than bees) that transmits the virus.

If the bushes in my field are infected, what should I do?

The infected bushes will never become healthy again. The fruit produced on them will always be crumbly and yields will be reduced. Infected plantings should be removed and replanted with healthy nursery stock. When a field has a high level of infection, it is better to take out and replant a large block than to replant small blocks each year. Maintaining a good level of soil fertility and adequate irrigation will help infected plants perform at their optimum until they can be replaced.

If I replant with 'Meeker', will the bushes become infected again?

Probably. In the Fraser Valley, new plantings are usually infected within 3-5 years. Dr. Bob Martin, U.S. Department of Agriculture in Corvallis, Oregon is working to develop 'Meeker' plants with resistance to RBDV. He anticipates these will be available in approximately 5 years. However, it will take several more years to increase the stock so that it is widely available.

What other varieties could I plant?

'Willamette', 'Haida', and 'Chilcotin' are resistant to raspberry bushy dwarf virus. 'Nootka' also appears to be resistant to infection, and it is worth examining the potential of this variety further. Although 'Chilcotin' and 'Haida' are resistant, they are not substitutes for a variety like 'Meeker' for a number of reasons. Consult the Berry Production Guide for more detailed variety information. None of these varieties are resistant to some strains of RBDV found in Europe.

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