Why berries?

There are so many great reasons to grow berries that I thought I better jot a few down so you can tell your friends why they should grow berries, too!

1. They taste great! Home-grown fruit will be fresher and taste better than fruit that has been picked half-ripe for ease of transportation then sat on shelves for a few days.
2. Berries are nutritional super-foods; packed with vitamins and anti-oxidants.
3. They produce fruit quickly –in the same or second year. A far quicker yield than fruit trees.
4. They don’t need much space and can even be grown in pots or on balconies
5. It’ll save you money. Berries can be very expensive – even at pick-your-own farms – so growing your own saves you cash... or allows you to have larger quantities (e.g. for jam) that you couldn’t justify buying at shop prices.
6. You can have the quantity you want – whether a handful to pop onto a cake or a bucketful to turn into jam or jelly.
7. Kids love them – and love foraging for them so growing berries is a great way to get kids out into the garden and interested in gardening. (Little visitors love discovering berries, too!)
8. Ballarat and surrounding district has a perfect climate for growing berries – a cool temperate climate with plenty of rainfall (especially Spring rain)
9. Most berries can be grown up walls, espaliered or trained over pergolas so they make excellent use of space that might otherwise be unproductive. Grapes over a pergola also provide valuable shade in Summer and allow light in during Winter.
10. As perennials, they continue to produce crops for many years (sometimes decades) so your initial investment is repaid many times over. They also fit brilliantly into a perennial permaculture garden, potager garden or food forest.
11. Once established, they are easy to care for so are very suitable for busy people with limited time in the garden. Although notes on the following pages detail ideal pruning regimes, many berries will still be OK if you don’t give them their optimum haircut each year – and you’ll still get fruit.
12. Once established, berries are usually very hardy. Although they might not give you much fruit, most berries will survive drought and neglect. Observe the blackberries throughout the Aussie bush – no gardeners there except the rabbits and wallabies and the berries are still doing fine!
13. Some berries (e.g. raspberries) are fragile and do not transport well; growing your own means that you experience the fruit at its peak flavour and texture.
14. Some fruits, like strawberries, have a high water content and a permeable skin so can take up large quantities of sprays (insecticides, fungicides, etc) so unless you buy certified-organic produce, you might not be sure what ‘bonus’ items you are getting with your fruit
15. Growing your own means you can be sure of getting unusual fruits which might not otherwise be available. In his book “Berry Bounty”, Allen Gilbert includes plants like feijoas, mangosteens, tamarillos, pomegranates and others that are not always seen in local green grocers.
16. Growing your own means you can have a wide range of fruits regardless of fashions in the retail industry or retail shortages due to weather or disease impacting commercial growers.

Are you convinced yet? I hope so! Grab a berry book from the library and start thinking about berries you’d like at YOUR place!