



GROWING BLUEBERRIES

CHOOSING PLANTING SITE

Choose a well-draining site in full sun.

Blueberries require a relatively acidic soil for good growth and fruit set. The soil pH should be between 4.5 to 4.8. A soil test will determine your pH level. Most garden soils have a higher pH and will require the addition of sulfur (sold as "soil acidifier").

PREPARING & PLANTING

Prepare beds by mixing in 4" of aged wood chips or leaf compost and required amount of sulfur. This is best done the Fall prior to planting.

Blueberries are partly self-sterile, plant at least two varieties for best fruiting result.

Space plants 4-6' apart in rows 8-10' apart. Set plants slightly deeper than they were at the nursery. Do not fertilize at planting time.

Water the plants thoroughly immediately after planting. A blueberry plant should receive one to two inches of water per week. This is critical.

WEED CONTROL

After planting, apply 4-6" of mulch around the base of the plants to conserve soil moisture and reduce weed growth. Sawdust, woodchips, shavings, bark, pine needles, straw, or composted leaves can be used as mulching materials.

Apply a new layer of mulch when the old layer starts to break down, maintaining a depth of 2".

FERTILIZATION

3-4 weeks after planting, add a small amount of compost as a top dressing to the soil, or add two ounces of a balanced fertilizer (e.g. Pro Gro) around each plant. Use the same amount in the following years, applying at bloom time. Do not over-fertilize, as this can lead to excessive tender growth and increase the potential for winter injury.

PRUNING & MAINTENANCE

Newly planted blueberries should not be allowed to fruit for the first year. Remove all flower buds in the spring to encourage root development and plant growth.

Once established, prune bushes every year, when they are fully dormant during late winter or early spring. Prune out any weak, low-growing, or diseased canes, or those over 6 years old (the thickest canes, with grey, peeling bark). Thin remaining canes.

A mature blueberry bush should have about 10 healthy canes varying in age from 1-6 years old. Most fruit is produced on vigorous one-year-old shoots on healthy two- to five-year-old canes.

DISEASES & PESTS

The key to good pest management is prevention. Keep your planting free of weeds (which compete with blueberries for nutrients and water, and may also harbor insects and diseases.)

Birds are typically the most serious pests of blueberries. Covering the plants with netting is the most effective control.

The SWD fly (Spotted Wing Drosophila) is becoming more and more wide spread. It can be helpful to harvest mature berries quickly and remove any spoiled fruit from the plants. Once fruit is harvested use quickly and store under refrigeration.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

NOURSE FARM: www.noursefarms.com, look under "Growing Info", then select crop under "Grow Your Plants"

JOHNNY'S SEEDS: www.johnnyseeds.com, look under "Grower's Library", then "Fruit Library"

CORNELL UNIVERSITY: www.gardening.cals.cornell.edu, look under "Garden Guidance", then "Food Gardening".

For more tips visit

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