

# BLUEBERRY CARE & VARIETIES

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The arrival of blueberry season in the Northwest is always a highly anticipated event. Those little berries pack many health benefits and are very versatile. For those of you who want to have fresh berries from your own yard, blueberries are simple to grow, and are one of the most productive fruits for the space you give them.

## **How should I plant my blueberries?**

Blueberries like a sunny site, and well-drained soil rich in organic material. If you can't find a good spot, raised beds work very well. Plant blueberries in groups to allow for good cross-pollination. Some of the smaller self-fertile types like 'Sunshine Blue' can be planted by themselves in the ground or in containers. Be sure when planting to add plenty of organic material – peat moss works well – and a layer of mulch on top of the ground to conserve moisture.

## **What kind of soil do blueberries need?**

Acidic and well-drained. Blueberries thrive in very acidic soil, even more acidic than that preferred by other acid-loving plants like rhododendrons and azaleas. Good drainage is also essential, although blueberries need plenty of moisture during the growing season. The best thing to do is to add plenty of peat moss at planting time and regularly use a fertilizer for acidic-soil loving plants.

## **How many plants do I need?**

In most cases you will need at least two different varieties to ensure good cross-pollination. Some varieties, like 'Sunshine Blue', are self-fertile and only require one plant to set fruit. Of course, if you really like blueberries, plant more. Keep in mind that a fully-grown blueberry plant will produce a lot of fruit!

## **What general care will my blueberries need?**

Blueberries are fairly self-sufficient, but a little care goes a long way in improving performance. First of all, adequate water during the growing season will enhance fruit production and overall health. An acidic fertilizer should be used in late Spring, but go easy on it as blueberries resent heavy fertilizing. Mulch around the plant every once in a while to conserve moisture and add organic matter in the root area. This can make a lot of difference because blueberries are very shallowly rooted and will dry out quickly on a hot day.

## **How should I prune my blueberries?**

Blueberries should be pruned yearly for the best results. Remove old growth periodically to keep plants productive. When in doubt, favor brighter-colored growth over old woody growth. Also, any weak or spindly branches should be removed. Finally, lightly thin the plants to prevent any problems that might occur from overbearing. Be careful not to remove too much, as fruit is produced on the previous year's growth, and heavy pruning might mean fewer berries.

## Blueberry Varieties 2009

VARIETY	RIPENS	BERRY ATTRIBUTES	COMMENTS	HEIGHT
BERKELEY	late midseason	large, powder blue, mild flavor	excellent producer	5-6 ft
BLUECROP	midseason	large, high quality	leading commercial variety	4-6 ft
BLUEGOLD	midseason	firm, flavorful	heavy and consistent producer	4 ft
BLUEJAY	early midseason	medium, mild flavor	extremely vigorous	6-7 ft
BLUERAY	midseason	large, crisp aromatic berries	clusters are large and tight	5-8 ft
BLUETTA	very early	medium, dark blue, tangy	compact & very cold hardy	3-4 ft
BRIGITTA	late	large, light blue, firm	very high quality berries	5-8 ft
CHANDLER	mid to late season	very large, delicious	world's largest blueberry!	5-6 ft
CHIPPEWA	midseason	large, light blue, excellent sweet flavor	very cold hardy	3 ft
COVILLE	late	large, medium blue, firm	needs pollinizer	4-6 ft
DARROW	late	very large, light blue, robust flavor	berries can reach half-dollar size	5-6 ft
DUKE	early	medium to large, light blue, mildly sweet	heavy and consistent producer	5-8 ft
EARLBLUE	very early	large, light blue, sweet	resistant to cracking	4-6 ft
ELLIOT	very late	small to medium, sky blue, mild	pick berries fully ripe	5-8 ft
HARDYBLUE	midseason	medium, dark blue, sweet	superior flavor	4 ft
HERBERT	late	large to very large, dark blue, sweet-tart	easy to pick	4-6 ft
IVANHOE	midseason	large to very large, medium blue, sweet-tart	high dessert quality	5-8 ft
JERSEY	late	small to medium, dark blue, very sweet	perfect for baking	7 ft
LEGACY	late	medium to large, light blue, robust flavor	vigorous, often evergreen	6 ft
NELSON	late	exception fruit quality and flavor	Bluecrop x Berkely	5-6 ft
NORTHBLUE	midseason	large, fine quality	excellent fresh or for baking	2-3 ft
NORTHCOUNTRY	midseason	medium, sky blue, sweet to mild	tough and vigorous	2 ft
NORTHLAND	early midseason	medium, dark blue, sweet	excellent for jams & baking	4 ft
NORTHSKY	midseason	small, sky blue	tastes like a wild blueberry	1-2 ft
OLYMPIA	midseason	medium, dark blue, excellent flavor	large, spreading bush	4 ft
PATRIOT	early	large, dark blue, highly flavored	low growing, spreading habit	4 ft
POLARIS	early	medium, light blue, delightful flavor	helps to have a pollinizer	4 ft
REKA	early	medium, firm	extremely productive	5-8 ft
REVEILLE	late midseason	medium, excellent flavor, firm	vigorous and productive	6-7 ft
RUBEL	late midseason	small, full flavor	extremely high antioxidant levels	6 ft
SIERRA	early to midseason	very large, good quality	new hybrid	4-6 ft
SPARTAN	early	very large, light blue, tangy sweet	one of the best flavors	5-6 ft
SUNSHINE BLUE	midseason	dime-sized, delicious	evergreen, self pollinating	3 ft
TOPHAT	in spring	pea sized, light blue	excellent for bonsai	1-2 ft
TORO	midseason	large, sky blue	full, heavy berry clusters	4-6 ft

**POLLINIZERS** - While all blueberries are moderately self fertile, to increase berry production plant more than one variety.