



Time and Hints to Take Home

Blueberries

Blueberries are one of only a few native North American fruits now grown as cultivated plants. This gives them the advantage of being relatively disease and pest free compared to many other fruits.

Blueberries are Zone 4 plants so they will grow in most parts of the valley. Although blueberries are self-fertile, meaning they pollinate themselves, fruit production is better with at least two varieties. The varieties Plant Land offers all work to pollinate each other in combinations. They are listed at the end of this sheet.

Blueberries have very exact soil requirements. We strongly recommend testing your soil pH before you plant. Simple test kits cost about \$1 and are well worth it. Blueberries require acidic conditions. Soil pH ranging from 4.5 to 4.8 is optimum. Rich soil is also important so the addition of organic matter such as peat and compost is recommended. Blueberries have a wide and shallow root system. When you are making a bed for them, be sure to lower the pH and amend the soil at least 2' down and 6' wide. Blueberries require excellent drainage and will not tolerate standing water or (because of their fibrous roots) a high water table.

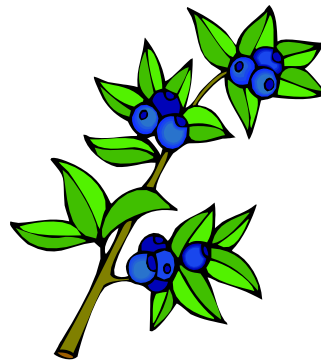
Full sun exposure produces the best crop. In areas of the valley that are slightly colder, you should choose a site that is protected from harsh winter winds. Because their shallow roots are very vulnerable to damage from even foot traffic, choose a site that is away from heavily used paths.

Blueberries grow as wide as they do high so space plants according to the full size they will reach. Allow

3-5' between rows. Dig a hole three times as wide and twice as deep as the container the shrub came in. Fill back in to plant the shrub at the same depth it was in the container. Water your blueberries in well and keep them well watered, the shallow roots can dry out quickly in hot weather. For the first season, pinch off any blossoms that form. This will encourage the plant

to put its energy into roots rather than fruit production. Mulch in the form of wood chips or grass clippings (chemical free only) is a good idea. It will keep the shallow roots cool and help with weed control.

Blueberries need to be kept weed free. Do not cultivate too deeply or vigorously because you could damage roots. Keep up with weeds and use hand pulling to avoid hurting the roots. Mulch helps to keep down weeds and offers some protection from light foot traffic. Deep watering during fruiting helps



sugar production for sweeter fruit. Blueberries should never be allowed to dry out. Fine shallow roots will wither and die in a very short time and a plant that has to constantly re-grow roots isn't going to be able to make much fruit!

Do not prune your blueberry bushes for several seasons. Because they fruit on old wood, they need to be allowed to produce fruiting wood for a few years. Once you do start pruning, it should be done in early spring on dormant plants. Remove unproductive, older branches first, and then make selective cuts at buds to encourage branching. The best fruit is produced on young vigorous branches. Encourage this type of growth by pruning out branches that are older than six years.

Test the soil in your blueberry patch each spring. A yearly application of powdered sulfur or aluminum sulfate is recommended to maintain soil pH. Blueberries commonly show magnesium deficiency that shows up as discolored leaves or stunted growth. When you chose a fertilizer for your plants, try to find

one that includes 3% magnesium to avoid this problem. Simple Epson salts are also a good source of magnesium. A yearly application of 1-2 tablespoons per plant each spring is a good idea. Avoid fertilizers that contain potassium chloride, as blueberries can be sensitive to it.

Blueberry bushes are typically productive for many, many years. Once they reach 8-9 years old they are at their peak for production. Some time after that point, they may begin to require more detailed pruning to maintain production and may need drastic pruning to rejuvenate very old plants.

While very few pests and diseases bother blueberries, be sure to treat any that do promptly. A plant weakened by disease or pests will be less productive and much more susceptible to winter kill. As with any plant that produces edible fruit, be careful what products you choose to use. Plant Land can provide both diagnosis and help choosing a remedy.

Northcountry – A sibling of Northsky, introduced in 1988 with plants that are larger and more productive. Fruit up to ½” in diameter with a sweet, mild flavor. Mature plants reach 18-24” high. Partially self fertile. **Zone 4.**

Northsky – Introduced in 1983, one of the shortest half high blueberries with a mature height of only 12-18” . Fruit is medium sized and is produced abundantly. Needs a pollinator for good production. **Zone 4.**

Bluecrop – High quality of fruit with good sub acid flavor. Good for fresh eating, preserves, baking and freezing. 3-4’ in height and 2-3’ wide. **Zone 4**

All Blueberries are \$16.99 each

The staff at Plant Land can answer any further questions you may have.