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## BLUEBERRY CARE & VARIETIES

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.

### **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

VARIETY	RIPENS	BERRY ATTRIBUTES	COMMENTS	HEIGHT
BLUEBERRY GLAZE	Midseason	small, wild blueberry flavor	self-fertile and easy to grow	2-3 ft
BLUECROP	Midseason	large, high quality	leading commercial variety	4-6 ft
BLUEJAY	Midseason	medium, good mild flavor	best for freezing and canning	6-7 ft
BLUERAY	Midseason	large, crisp aromatic berries	clusters are large and tight	5-8 ft
BOUNTIFUL BLUE	Late	small, super sweet, prolific	evergreen, bluish foliage	3-4 ft
CHANDLER	Mid to late	very large, delicious	world's largest blueberry!	5-6 ft
CHIPPEWA	Midseason	large, very sweet	compact habit, can grow in a pot	4-5 ft
DARROW	Late	very large, robust flavor	one of the largest berries	4-5 ft
DUKE	Early	medium to large, light blue, mildly sweet	heavy and consistent producer	5-8 ft
ELLIOTT	Late	medium, firm, sweet when fully ripe	leading late commercial variety	4-6 ft
EARLIBLUE	Very early	medium to large, light blue, mildly sweet	one of the first to ripen	4-6 ft
HARDYBLUE	Midseason	medium, good flavored and sweet	tolerates heavy clay soil	5-6 ft
JELLY BEAN	Midseason	medium, supper sweet	heavy crop, can grow in a pot	2 ft
JERSEY	Late	medium and very sweet	heavy, reliable producer	5-7 ft
NORTHCOUNTRY	Midseason	medium, sky blue, sweet to mild	tough and vigorous	2 ft
PATRIOT	Early	large, dark blue, highly flavored	low growing, spreading habit	4 ft
PEACH SORBET	Midseason	medium and sweet	Compact, evergreen and self-fertile	2 ft
PINK LEMONADE	Late midseason	pink, mild tasting, medium, firm berry	reddish - brown winter twigs	4-5 ft
POLARIS	Early	medium, aromatic, firm and very sweet	plant with Northblue or Chippewa	3-4 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	Late	pea sized, light blue, wild blueberry flavor	dwarf, self-fertile	1-2 ft
TORO	Midseason	large, sky blue	full, heavy berry clusters	4-6 ft

**EARLY:** Late May into June

**MID:** June

**LATE:** Late June into July

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

**CULTURAL REQUIREMENTS:** All Blueberries like full sun but can tolerate partial. They like acidic soil. Fertilize in the spring or fall.