



GROWING BLUEBERRIES

SITE: Blueberries can remain productive for many years so plan for a long-term location. They thrive in full sun but will tolerate some shade. Avoid frost pockets and areas prone to flooding.

SOIL AND PREPARATION: The optimum soil pH is 4.5-5.5 so in coastal areas no liming will likely be necessary. If the pH is above 5.5 it may be lowered by incorporating 10-16 cm (4-6") peat moss into the top 16-20 cm (4-8") of soil the previous fall, or the same amount of sawdust (not cedar unless well composted). Blueberries thrive on soils rich in organic material and silt or sandy loam may be amended with 5-10 (1-2") of the above dug into the top 16-25 cm. Decomposing sawdust robs the soil of nitrogen which can be corrected by the addition of 454 g (1 lb) ammonium sulphate per 9.3 sq. m (100 sq. ft.) per 2.5 cm (1") sawdust.

Because blueberries demand good drainage consider raised beds, 20-40 cm high (8-16") and 0.9-1.2 m (3-4') wide. The bottom 7.5 cm (3") may be covered with 7.5 cm gravel, then a mix of half sandy soil and half peat or 1:1 soil/sawdust.

POLLINATION: blueberries are self-pollinated but cross-pollination between several varieties will improve yield and fruit size. See list below.

PLANTING: In coastal areas fall planting is recommended. Spacing may be 1.2-1.8 m (4-6') apart in the row. The root ball of container grown plants should be broken apart, the root system of bare root stock should be spread out. The plants should be set at about the same level as in the pot or nursery but no more than 5 cm (2") deeper. Roots should be covered to a depth of 2.5-5.0 cm (1-2 in) and watered in well to put them in good contact with the soil. Branches are pruned back by about 1/3.

MULCHING: If the soil is mineral (silt or loam), mulching to a depth of 7.5 cm (3") is recommended. It may be increased to 16 cm (6") over the years. Well composted organic material of various kinds may be used and will improve soil structure, moisture conservation and weed control.

FERTILIZING: Fertilizer is applied to the soil within the dripline of the plant, moving aside the mulch and replacing it later. Four weeks after planting a 10-10-10 formulation of 30 g (1 oz) per plant may be applied away from the crown or stems. Thereafter berry formulations may be applied according to instructions on the container. Overuse of nitrogen predisposes blueberries to disease.