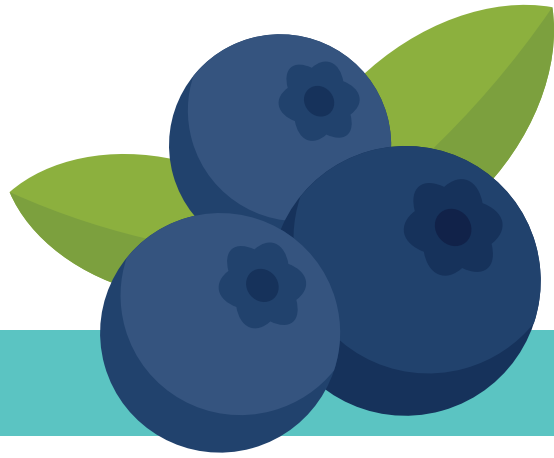


# ZAMZOWS

## Backyard Berry & Fruit Fest

### Blueberry Care



#### **Sight Selection**

Blueberry plants should be located where they will receive a minimum of 8 hours of sunlight. Full sun exposure is best for berry size and production. Do not locate against the south side of a building or wall. This will be too hot and cause leaf burn.

#### **Soil Testing and Prep**

Soil pH should be near 5.5, high in organic content, and drain well. Blueberry plants will not survive if pH is above 6.0. Pelletized sulfur is very effective to lower the soil pH. Soils high in clay that remain soggy will promote root rot. Augment the soil with compost/peatmoss and sand as needed to create a sandy loam. For best results, soil amendments and sulfur should be added the season before the blueberry plants are planted.

#### **Planting For Success**

Transplant nursery plants while still dormant. For better pollination, select 2 different varieties of blueberry plants. Soak plants for 1 hour before planting. Do not improve the soil added into the planting hole. Do not place plant deeper than found in the pot. Do not fertilize newly planted blueberries. Thrive dilution along with 3-2-1 Grow tablets is highly recommended to reduce transplant shock.

#### **Watering Requirements**

Blueberries do not tolerate either standing water or draught. Soil should remain evenly moist during the growing season, not waterlogged. Do not water overhead with sprinklers. This will cause disease problems. Water should only be applied at the soil. A drip system is ideal for watering blueberries.

#### **Fertilizing and When To Use It**

In the early spring before blueberry plants break dormancy, they should be fed once with a nitrogen-based fertilizer that helps soil pH to remain acidic such as Ammonium Sulfate or Cotton Seed Meal. In the fall, after harvest, they should be fed once with a phosphorus-based fertilizer.

#### **When To Harvest**

Harvest timing will depend on variety. For the sweetest fruit, pick when the fruit is dark blue, and the stem is starting to turn blue from green.

#### **Preparing for Fall/Winter**

An inch of compost applied to the soil around the base of the plant will help maintain soil moisture and resist wild, sudden changes in soil temperatures.

#### **Pruning**

Prune in the late winter early spring. Prune out any diseased or winter killed canes. Prune out any weak, spindly looking canes leaving 6 to 12 hardy looking canes. Berries form on canes during their second and third year. By the fourth year, production starts to taper off. New growth canes may be green and have no side shoots. Old canes may be gray/brown and have many side shoots.

#### **Diseases**

Most blueberries are susceptible to a fungus that will cause mummy berries where the berries remain small and do not ripen correctly. Micronized sulfur spray should be applied before the disease is seen on the plants, usually early summer. Do not spray any fungicide if the daytime high will exceed 80 degrees as this will kill the plant.

#### **Insect Pests**

Blueberry plants have very few insect issues in SW Idaho. Earwigs might damage berries while still green which will misshapen the fruit. If the berries are on the ground, slugs might help themselves to the fruit. Both pests can easily be controlled with Bonide Bug and Slug applied to the soil around the base of the plant.