



BLUEBERRIES



At a glance...

Pollination:

Plant 2 or more different varieties

Spacing:

4'-5' in the row 6'-8' between rows, less space can be left between plants with lower bush varieties

PH:

VERY IMPORTANT!!! Blueberries must have a soil PH of 4.5- 5.5. Measure and maintain PH levels for optimum success. It may be best to test your soils before planting. Addition of elemental sulfur may be necessary to adjust PH. Regular pelletized sulfur is the best material to use to reduce PH. If a significant amount is required, split the amount into 2 applications.

Watering:

Because of blueberries' shallow fibrous root systems they often require frequent watering. Maintain soil moisture and do not allow the roots to dry out. Water 1-3 times per week if dry, not every day. Blueberries like their soils moist but also well drained.

Mulching:

A mulch of 3-4 inches thick will help to retain soil moisture as well as suppress weeds. Due to the shallow rooted nature of blueberries they do not like to compete with sod when they are young and getting established. Composted sawdust, wood chips or bark mulch is best, even pine needles. Avoid too much saw dust or leaves as they can mat down and create a moisture barrier.

The Details...

Blueberries like a well-drained, highly acid soil with access to plenty of water. Surprisingly, the back fill sand around the foundation of a house recently built can be a good spot and blueberries make an ideal edible ornamental, with white bell shaped flowers in the spring and brilliant red fall color.

Space the plants 4 feet apart in rows that are 5-6 feet apart. Spacing can be closer for lower bush varieties. See above for soil requirements in regard to PH. Once the planting site has been chosen, lay out the plants. Dig a hole just a bit larger than the pot. Soil amendments can be added to the hole, being sure to incorporate them in with the native soils as not to create a 'pocket' of false soil. We carry a Successful Blueberry Planting Mix specially formulated for acid loving plants. After planting backfill the hole and water well.

If amending your soils with sulfur see the chart for soil types and rate of application:

Desired PH value for blueberries 4.5

<i>Present PH of soil</i>	AMOUNT OF SULFUR IN LBS PER 100 SQ FEET TO LOWER PH		
	<u>SAND</u>	<u>LOAM</u>	<u>CLAY</u>
4.5	0	0	0
5	0.4	1.2	1.4
5.5	0.8	2.4	2.6
6	1.2	3.5	3.7
6.5	1.5	4.6	4.8
7	1.9	5.8	6

Example:

6 plants planted at 4' apart would require a space of 24" x 4' or 96 sq feet. Allow more space for multiple rows due to a wider spacing between rows.

Yellow leaves on blueberries is a sign that the PH of the soil is too high, amend as directed. Yellow leaves may also be a sign of nitrogen deficiency. The plants can be fed with Pro Holly to correct this.

After 2 years of establishment you should be getting 12 inches of new growth each year. If not, recheck your soil PH and/or consider feeding the planting with a liquid Fish/Sea blend or a pelletized organic fertilizer such as Pro Holly.

After 3-4 years of establishment blueberries should be pruned during their dormant period in early spring. Remove lower, weak branches. Old and heavy branches can be thinned out from the center. On older established plants, you should remove 1-3 of the oldest canes each year, pruning them to the base of the plant at the soil level. Ideally you would have 10-12 stems of varying ages per mature plant.

Berries may need protection from birds. The best way to assure top quality fruit is to delay picking until several days to a week after the fruit has turned fully blue, birds may set you to picking fruit that is not at peak. Ask to see our blueberry house to get an idea of what you can do to net your planting. (No pun intended!)

Text by Effie Eifer – Fruit Drawings by Gabe Tempesta
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