

A top-down photograph of a terracotta bowl filled with fresh blueberries. The bowl sits on a rustic wooden surface. To the left of the bowl, several green leaves and stems are scattered on a piece of light-colored burlap fabric. The lighting is soft, highlighting the texture of the berries and the wood.

# BLUEBERRIES

FROM THE  
ANDERSON'S  
**FRUIT GROWING GUIDE**  
BY MARK ANDERSON



# BLUEBERRIES

**While native to the Northeastern part of North America,** Blueberries can grow in a variety of climates. They prefer a very acidic soil, much like their close relatives azaleas and rhododendrons. Gardeners will struggle to grow blueberries in alkaline soils even with extra care and effort to adjust the soil pH.

In colder climates, choose either highbush or hardy half-high blueberry plants as they will tolerate harsher winter temperatures. All blueberries have fine roots that grow just below the surface of the soil, and thick mulches help protect these roots. A 3-4 inch mulch will not only protect, but help conserve moisture, cool the surrounding soil, and restrict weed growth - all things that blueberries prefer.

Though many blueberries are fully or partially self-fertile, we recommend that you grow at least 2 different varieties to assist in pollination. Growing multiple varieties will encourage bigger berries, heavier production, and will extend the harvest season as they ripen at different times. Highbush varieties grow up to 6-8 feet tall and need winter cold to set fruit that ripen anywhere from late spring to late summer. Hardy half-high varieties grow 4-5 feet tall and wide, handle colder winters better and can be protected from excessive cold by deep, winter snow. They are also very well adapted to growing in containers, and doing so can help you maintain acidity in the soil easier.

**Location:** Open site in full sun, with good air circulation. Pick a location that gives you access to the plant from all sides for easy picking.

**Soil:** Blueberries prefer well drained soil with a high organic matter content - the less clay the better. In Utah, the pH needs to remain around 4.5-5.5, which is doable, but very difficult to maintain in native soils. We recommend growing blueberries in an acidic planting mix in large containers or in raised beds to control the soil and the pH more easily. Use soil sulfur to bring the soil down into the 5 pH range, and once a month add Magnesium Sulfate to maintain the pH and promote more blossoms.

**Planting:** Plant in early spring though early summer in colder climates. Position the crown so that it is at or barely below (1/2" maximum) the soil surface. Space multiple plants at 4-6 feet apart. See attached bare root and container planting guide. If planting in a container, select one that is at the very least 20 inches wide and 16-18 inches deep and fill with an acidic potting soil like Kellogg Acid Planting Mix.

**Water:** Make sure to provide regular water throughout the growing season - usually a deep watering every 7 days depending on heat and sun exposure. As the plants mature, maintain soil moisture during the growing season. Avoid overhead watering, as it can encourage mildews and botrytis mold.





**Fertilizer:** Use a balanced fertilizer in early spring with micronutrients to maintain consistent growth and fruit production. We recommend Anderson's Best: That's All It Takes, Fertilome Fruit, Nut and Pecan food, or Natural Guard Organic Fruit and Citrus Fertilizer. Minimal fertilizer is needed for the first year or two, but as the bush matures and grows, 1/2 - 1 cup of fertilizer per plant in a 4'x4' area will provide ample nutrients. If iron chlorosis occurs, use a chelated iron supplement like EDDHA 6% Iron. Once a month, use 1 cup of Magnesium Sulfate in 4-5 gallons of water, and water each plant thoroughly to aid in acidification and to encourage more bloom production.

**Pruning:** Always prune to prevent overbearing as blueberries often produce so many fruits that the berries are small and plant growth is stunted. Each year, either thin out some of the oldest branches, or cut back the ends of the twigs to where the fruit buds are more widely spaced. You can do a combination of both techniques. Take out or trim back branches that are crossing or have become too dense and limit accessibility.

**Harvest & Yield:** Harvest in late Spring or throughout the summer depending on variety. Pick when the fruit is sweet and has a deep color throughout. Mature highbush and hardy half-high blueberries will yield 8-12 pounds of fruit per plant.

**Pests:** Blueberries are relatively pest and disease free in the Intermountain West, but occasionally can develop botrytis mold and mildew diseases. As needed, apply a general-purpose fungicide like Copper Soap from Natural Guard or Complete Disease Control from Monterey (both products are organic and very safe to use on edibles right up until harvest) to prevent and control disease outbreaks.

## BLUERAY

This is the largest berry on the market! Very sweet, light blue fruits resist cracking. Ripens in July and the harvest goes on for weeks. The 5-6' tall bushes become a blaze of crimson in the fall, so they are ideal arranged as an informal hedge. Great for fresh eating and freezing. Blueray performs particularly well in areas with hot summers or very cold winters, and produces high quality berries with outstanding dessert flavor. The stunning rosy pink flowers turn bright white when in full bloom.

**Zones:** 4-7

**Height:** 4'-6' tall



## BLUECROP

Bluecrop is especially prized for its exceptional drought resistance and for being the most frost tolerant highbush blueberry cultivar. Bluecrop produces abundant sweet, bright-blue fruit in mid-season that is delicious fresh or baked in cobblers or pies. This shrub's foliage turns a fiery red in fall, giving it great ornamental value as well. You'll have fresh blueberries for pies and preserves for many, many years. Bluecrop is a Midseason variety. Medium size fruit with a high sugar content. Plants yield heavily.

**Zones:** 4-7

**Height:** 4'-6' tall



## JERSEY

Jersey is a very sweet blueberry making it a favorite for baking. It is widely adaptable to varying soil conditions and changes to a fiery orange in the fall. It is a heavy producer and one of the most widely grown varieties. The berries are crack resistant and small to medium in size. This blueberry grows best on sites where most other crops fail. The bush is very vigorous and productive. The clusters are long and loose. It is suitable for mechanical harvesting. Prune as needed in late winter three years after planting.

**Zones:** 4-8

**Height:** 5'-7' tall







## PINK LEMONADE

Pink Lemonade is a unique blueberry that provides season-long color with pretty, pink blooms in the spring and fruit that are pale greenish at first, then dappled pink, and finally turning to deep pink on ripening. The berries are sweet and mild in flavor and firm. Like all blueberries, Pink Lemonade requires high light levels and well drained acid soil, high in organic material.

**Zones:** 4-8

**Height:** 4' - 5'

**Spacing:** 4' - 5'

**Spread:** 4' - 5'

**Sun/Shade:** Full Sun

**Pollinator:** Self-pollinating, but does best when planted with another cultivar

**Blooms:** Mid spring

**Fruit:** Fruit ripening occurs mid-late season with moderate yields of medium-sized, glossy, firm bright pink fruit with mild flavor.



## NORTHLAND

Northland is another easy to grow variety. Its high sugar content makes it great for eating fresh as well as baking and jam. Highbush variety that excels in many different soil conditions. But does need an acidic soil environment. This is an early season ripening variety producing firm sweet fruit. It is common to get 15-20 lbs of fruit from mature plants.

**Zones:** 3-7

**Height:** 3-5'

**Spread:** 5'

**Sun/shade:** Sun

**Pollinator:** Self fruitful, but will do better with another cultivar.







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