



CARE OF SOUTHERN Highbush BLUEBERRIES

These are hybrids of blueberries which grew wild when European settlers first arrived in the New World. New Southern Highbush cultivars were developed to grow in California and other climates with low chill hours. Blueberry plants make an excellent addition to edible landscapes. They have dark blue green foliage and attractive pink or white blooms.

As a guideline, plant two plants for each blueberry loving family member. Plants can be planted as individual specimens or spaced about 2 ½ feet apart to create a hedge. See varieties for heights and ripening times.

Planting

In Containers

For optimum control of soil factors, it is strongly recommended to plant in containers. The potting mix should be acidic, (pH 4.5-5.5) high in organic matter and well draining.

Recommended mix components include:

60%-80% ground and screened conifer bark, 10-30% peat moss, 10% Perlite or sand. After planting, keep the soil moist and mulch with bark, acid compost or sawdust.

In the Ground

Blueberries can be planted in the ground. Blueberry plants require abundant light and good air circulation so select your site accordingly. Work up a planting area 2 ½ feet in diameter and one foot deep. Remove 1/3 to ½ of the soil. Add an equal amount of pre-moistened peat moss and mix well. One 4 cubic foot compressed bale will be sufficient for 4-5 plants. To conserve moisture and promote living soil structure, mulch with bark, acid compost, or sawdust . If soil is poor or doesn't drain well, raised beds are effective. Most soils will require some amendments to maintain acidity. Pine needle mulch or sulfur granules can be used to maintain acidity levels.

Watering

Blueberries require more water than some other garden plants. Keep soil moist.

Pruning

Pruning blueberry bushes to reduce the number of flowers and developing fruit will improve berry size and hasten development. Allow the plants to get well established in the first year by pinching off flower buds.

Thereafter each winter:

1. Remove low growth around the base. If it doesn't grow up, prune it out!
2. Remove dead wood and non vigorous twiggy wood. Select bright colored wood with long laterals. Remove blotchy colored short growth.
3. If 1/3 of the wood has not been removed by the above steps, thin out the fruiting laterals and small branches until the balance has been obtained.
4. As plants get older, prune to select 4-6 bright colored erect canes per bush. Prune these canes in October down to a height of 6"-8".

Fertilizing

Blueberries like acid fertilizers such as Azalea formulations.

But be very careful not to use nitrogen in a NITRATE form!! For newly planted stock, use 2 tablespoons of 10-20-10 or similar fertilizer in late spring or once plants are established. Follow manufacturer's directions. For Organic fertilizers, use blood meal and cottonseed meal, and prepared compost. Avoid fresh manures. Blueberries are very sensitive to over-fertilization. Stop fertilizing by October, or the time of onset of cooler fall weather. Resume fertilizing in spring after blueberries have leafed out (around March 15).

SOUTHERN Highbush Blueberry Varieties

JUBLIEE *Midseason* - Jubilee performs well in heavier soils and in summer heat and sudden winter cold. The bush is upright and compact with easy-picking plentiful crops of sky blue berries born on the perimeter of the bush. Jubilee berries are medium sized and especially tasty, growing in large clusters that ripen over a two week period. Fall foliage is yellow orange. Jubilee is recommended in California in areas that receive at least 500 chilling hours.

MISTY *Early* - Misty is one of the most attractive southern high bush varieties. The bright blue-green foliage provides a perfect contrast to the pink and white spring flowers and sky blue summer fruit. The berries are medium to large size and of excellent quality. In mild climates, they are somewhat evergreen. Yields best when planted with other blueberries. Chilling requirement is low at 300 hours.

ONEAL *Very Early* - Oneal features high quality dark blue fruit, with great flavor and texture. The bush is of medium vigor with a spreading habit to 5 feet. Foliage is an attractive grey-green in summer accented with red stems and branches. Chilling requirement is 400-500 hours.

SHARPBLUE *Early* - Sharpblue is the best choice for areas with mild winters where hard frosts are infrequent. It will be evergreen and bloom and fruit almost year-round, in mild climates with fewer than 500 chilling hours. The bush will reach 5 to 6 ft. The berries are dark blue, about the size of a dime, with excellent flavor and texture.

SOUTHMOON *Midseason* -Southmoon bears large crisp and tasty blueberries. The bush is vigorous and upright and does especially well in lighter sandy soils or with generous additions of organic matter. It performs well in California, both inland and on the coast, where chilling hours reach 500.

SUNSHINE BLUE *Midseason* -The most ornamental blueberry we offer, this semi-dwarf evergreen blueberry features a highly branched compact habit to 3 feet tall. The showy hot pink flowers fade to white in spring, yielding large crops of dime-sized, delicious blueberries with a unique tangy flavor for up to 9 weeks in the summer. Sunshine Blue tolerates higher pH soils better than other blueberries. It is self-pollinating. The low chilling requirement of 150 hours makes it suitable for even the warmest California climates.