

Blueberry Growing Guide

Congratulations on becoming an owner of a new blueberry bush!

Below is a quick start guide to getting your bush established as well as some tips for how to avoid common problems. More information is available at fourwindsgrowers.com. Now that you have unpacked your tree, be sure to remove the plastic bag that keeps the soil in place during shipping.

Location:

Blueberry bushes will grow the best if you plant them in a sunny spot in your yard with decent airflow. Ideally, this location would be able to provide 8+ hours of direct sunlight per day. It's no secret that blueberries prefer acidic soils. One of the easiest ways to accomplish this is with an actively decomposing soil mix that contains compost and fine mulch.

Planting:

Blueberries can be planted in the ground or containers so long as they get full sun, good airflow, and maintain a soil pH of 4.5-5.5 ph. When growing in the ground prep a 24" diameter hole that is at least 12" deep and amend with compost, peat moss, and premium potting mix designed for acid-loving plants. This soil mix will ensure optimal moisture and promote soil health by attracting beneficial bugs and fungi. It is important that you do not mix fertilizers in the planting hole or when backfilling your blueberries.

When planting blueberries in pots, use a potting mix that is well-draining, high in organic matter, and try to avoid terra cotta pots as they tend to pull water away from the plant. Blueberries can be planted very close together and it is highly recommended that you have at least 2 different varieties planted together to increase pollination.

Watering:

The amount you water will heavily depend on your climate but keeping your soil consistently moist is a must. A weekly watering at a minimum should keep your shrubs adequately moist but do hold off for a few days if it rains. Blueberries require more water than the average garden plant but with regular watering and mulching, you will be growing delectable blueberries in no time. When watering, avoid watering the foliage as this can encourage the development of fungal diseases.

Fertilizing:

Blueberries are sensitive to over-fertilizing. We offer a product called G&B Organic Citrus and Fruit Tree Fertilizer (8-4-2) that works well for blueberry plants in pots or in the ground. Start feeding in early spring and feed regularly throughout the growing season as per instructions. Acid fertilizers for camelias, rhododendron and azaleas also work well for

blueberry plants but be careful not to overdo it and harm your plant as they are not heavy feeders.

Pruning:

Pruning Blueberries is simple, but there are a few tricks to improve both fruit size and quality. Start in the winter with the basics. Begin by removing dead wood, or twiggy non-vigorous wood that has lost all color. Then, remove damaged or broken wood and limbs with sunburn or bug damage. Finally, remove diseased wood which is usually blotchy colored growth on the canes or leaves. Look for places that may act as a way in for pests or diseases and remove them.

Once you have cleaned the plant of the dead, damaged, and diseased wood, prune for shape by leaving around 5 healthy canes per bush and bringing them down to 2-3 ft in the winter. Remove low growth around the base. If it doesn't grow up, prune it out.

Mulch:

The use of mulches will conserve precious water and help inhibit weed growth. A 2-3-inch layer of wood chips, fir bark, compost, or other organic matter can be very helpful for water retention. "Living mulches" such as nitrogen-fixing clovers can also be planted between trees & shrubs. To avoid root diseases, always keep grasses and other vegetation away from the root collar area. Keep all mulches at least six inches away from the base of the trunk or shrub. For growers in cold climates, an extra thick 8"-10" layer of mulch around the base of the tree just before winter acts as a layer of insulation that will help keep your roots alive over winter.

Extra Blueberry Tips:

Blueberry bushes are quite easy to grow given the correct climate. These thirsty shrubs need lots of water, but it is important to water the soil rather than the foliage to prevent the development of fungal diseases.

Amendments like sulfur will help to increase acidity but be careful not to overdo it and harm your shrub.

It is recommended that you grow at least two plants per blueberry-consuming person in your household.