

LANDSCAPING WITH BLUEBERRIES

By Fall Creek Farm & Nursery, Inc.

Compliments of:



Whether you plant them for the birds, your children, or yourself, blueberries can work very well in your landscape plans. Blueberries have delicate bell shaped blooms in spring, followed by glossy green leaves throughout the summer, delicious powder blue to dark blue fruit, striking fall color, and brilliant winter wood.

Listed below are the common uses and some varieties, which are most suited for that use. Please remember that your success depends on proper planting and cultural care.

Grouping By Size

Blueberries can vary in size when mature from low ground covers up to large bushes. The wild lowbush selections form a groundcover up to 6 feet wide and 12 inches tall. The half-high blueberries are quite compact and spreading, ranging from 1.5 feet to 3 feet tall. Other compact varieties grow a bit taller, reaching 3-4 feet in height and width. Most highbush blueberries grow to 4-6 feet in the garden, while taller more vigorous varieties can grow to 6 feet in a home garden or more with extra care. Please note: the ultimate sizes your plants will obtain are dependent on many factors, including soil type, climate, cultural care, pruning, etc.

Hedges and Border Plantings

Blueberries make excellent hedges if planted correctly and the right varieties are used. To form solid hedges or screens, place plants 2.5 to 3 feet apart. If uniform shape and texture is desired use the same variety in the row. Most highbush varieties are self-pollinating and do not require another variety to set fruit. For tall hedges use the faster growing, upright varieties. If a shorter hedge is desired, use the compact varieties and plant 2.5 feet apart. Bluetta is especially attractive when used in this way. Patriot also works well.

For border plantings along walks or skirting a planting bed use half-high bushes. Use them where dwarf rhododendrons or compact evergreen azaleas are planted.

Container Planting

If the soil type in your area is not suitable for blueberries or your growing space is limited to a deck or patio, container growing is an option. The half-high varieties lend themselves to this use. Some varieties will fill out a container such as a half whiskey barrel when mature.

Fall Color & Winter Wood Color

Blueberries are noted for their striking fall foliage. Red hues from burgundy to flame, as well as bright yellow oranges, can add rich color to the fall landscape. Please note: colors will vary somewhat with location and climate.

Although the reason most people buy blueberry plants is not the winter wood color, it is certainly worth noting. The bare branches of blueberry plants have brilliant wood color that is beautiful throughout the winter months and a striking contrast to a snowy background.

**STARTING RIGHT
WITH BLUEBERRIES**
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Blueberries bring a unique combination of delicious fruit and striking ornamental beauty to the garden and landscape. Blueberries are easy to grow, require little care, and are seldom bothered by pests. If a few basic steps are followed your blueberry plants can thrive and last a lifetime.

Varieties

Blueberry varieties are distinguished by their climate suitability and ripening season. Be sure to choose varieties suited to your area. You may want to select varieties that ripen at different times or feature large fruit (best for fresh eating and desserts) or small fruit (best for muffins and pancakes). Bushes with brilliant fall color or different growth habits offer the gardener lots of choices to use throughout the landscape. For blueberry lovers, allow at least two plants per family member.

Site Selection and Preparation

Select a sunny location in well drained soil free of weeds and well worked. Locate in an area where irrigation water is available as best results will be obtained by keeping the root zone moist throughout the growing season. Where the soil is poor or marginally drained, raised beds 3-4 feet wide and 8-12" high work well for blueberries.

A fail safe way to grow blueberries in almost any soil is to incorporate peat moss into the planting medium. For planting directly in the ground, work up a planting area approximately 2 ½ feet in diameter and one foot deep. Remove 1/3 to 1/2 of the soil. Add an equal amount of premoistened peatmoss and mix well. One 4 cubic foot compressed bale will usually be sufficient for 4-5 plants. For raised beds mix equal volumes of peatmoss with acid compost or planting mix. Blueberries thrive in acidic soils. Your garden center representative can recommend a soil asidifier if necessary for your area.

Spacing

Blueberries can be planted as close as 2 ½ feet apart to form solid hedgerows or spaced up to 6 feet apart as individual specimens. If planted in rows, allow 8-10 feet between the rows depending on equipment used for mowing or cultivating.

Planting

For container stock, remove from pot and lightly roughen up the outside surface of the rootball. Set the top soil line of the plant about 1-2 inches higher than the existing ground and firm around the rootball. Mound soil up along sides of exposed root mass. Water well.

Mulching

Blueberries do best with a 2-4" mulch over the roots to conserve moisture, prevent weeds and add organic matter. Bark mulch, acid compost, sawdust, grass clippings, ect. All work well. Repeat every other year.

Pruning

It is important that blueberries get established before allowing them to bear fruit. Thereafter, they should be heavily pruned each year to avoid overfruiting which results in small fruit or poor growth.

Remove all blooms as they appear the first year. In the years thereafter, follow these steps after the leaves have dropped.

- 1) Remove low growth around the base. If it doesn't grow up, it gets pruned out!
- 2) Remove the dead wood, and non-vigorous twiggy wood. Select for bright colored wood with long (at least 3 inch) laterals. Remove blotchy colored short growth.
- 3) If 1/3 to 1/2 of the wood has not been removed by the above steps, thin out the fruiting laterals and small branches until this balance has been obtained.

Fertilizing

Blueberries like acid fertilizers such as Rhody or Azalea formulations. For newly planted stock, use 2 tablespoons of 10-20-10 (or similar fertilizer) in late spring or once plants are established. (Careful! Blueberries are very sensitive to over fertilization!) For subsequent years, use 1 ounce of fertilizer for each year from planting to a total of 8 ounces per plant. Apply in early spring and again in late spring for best results. Always water well after fertilizing. For organic fertilizers, blood meal and cottonseed meal work well. Avoid using fresh manures.

Blueberry Varieties

VARIETY	ZONE	FRUIT CHARACTER (season, size & flavor)	MATURE SIZE	BUSH HABIT	FALL COLOR
Patriot	3-7	early, large, tangy	3-5'	open, spreading	red, orange, yellow
Bluetta	4-7	early, medium, tangy	3-5'	globe	flame
Duke	4-7	early, med-large, mild	4-6'	stocky, upright, open	orange
Earliblue	5-7	early, medium, sweet	4-6'	upright, compact	red
Spartan	5-7	early, very large, tangy sweet	4-6'	upright	yellow/orange
Northland	3-7	early-mid, medium, sweet	4-7'	upright, spreading	yellow-orange
Bluejay	4-7	early-mid, medium, mild	6-7'	upright	red, burgundy
Bluecrop	4-7	mid, large, sweet	4-6'	upright, open	red
Bluegold	4-7	mid, med-large, sweet	3-5'	compact globe	yellow
Blueray	4-7	mid, very large, mild	4-6'	upright, open	bright red
Toro	4-7	mid, large, mild sweet	4-6'	stocky, upright	crimson red
Olympia	5-7	mid, medium, very sweet	6-8'	spreading, globe	red-orange
Hardyblue	4-7	mid, medium, very sweet	4-6'	upright	bright red
Top Hat	3-7	mid, small, wild	1-2'	globe	red
Berkeley	5-7	mid-late, large, mild	5-7'	stocky spreading	Yellow/Orange/ red
Chandler	4-7	mid-late, largest, excellent	5-7'	slightly spreading	wine, orange
Rubel	4-7	mid-late, small, sweet	4-6'	upright	bright fire red
Elliott	4-7	late, large, tangy	4-6'	upright, open	deep red/wine
Brigitta	4-7	late, med-large, sweet-tart	4-6'	upright, open	orange/red
Jersey	4-7	late, medium, sweet	6-8'	upright	orange flame
Darrow	5-7	late, largest, juicy	4-6'	upright	orange/red