

Blueberries

Growing blueberries.

Where your going to plant them. A soil test should be used to determine the nutrient status and pH before planting.

Blueberries do not perform well in wet or heavily, poorly structured clay soils. Blueberries do best in acid soil with a pH range of 4.5 to 5.2. A pH outside this range can result in poor growth and low yields.

Blueberries are relatively shallow rooted and have fine, thread like roots which require open porous soil. They require soil that drains well throughout the year and hold adequate moisture for good plant growth during the summer months. Plants cannot tolerate extended periods of flooding, especially when they are actively growing. Poorly drained soil can result in poor plant growth, poor yield, root rot and plant death.

Most of the blueberry roots that take up nutrients and water are in the upper 40 cm of soil and within the dripline of the bush. A uniform and adequate supply of moisture is essential.

Moisture demand is particularly great during fruit development. Drip or trickle irrigation is best, but sprinklers can be used.

Weed control is essential. All perennial weeds such as quackgrass, buttercup, horsetail and Canada thistle should be controlled before planting.

Drainage should be installed before planting in poorly drained soil.

Raised beds help to overcome problems with drainage. You can incorporate small amounts of sawdust in the soil before planting.

Check and control pH if its too low by putting dolomite or ground limestone. Soil pH too high add sulfur and add sawdust into soil and topdressing with peat moss will help lower it. You should add sawdus[†] on top every 2 years. Manure and compost can be added on top in the years you are not putting sawdust on in small amounts worked into the soil.

You can plant in the fall or spring. Spring planting is preferred to avoid losses due to frost.

Generally, two-year-old plants are used. Ensure that root balls are thoroughly wetted before planting. If root bound break apart before planting. Don't plant any deeper than the pot. If planted too deep roots and crown may be deprived of oxygen. Remove the low twiggy growth at the bottom of the plant, leaving the strong healthy ones. Water after planting unless it's raining heavily. Fertilize 3 to 4 weeks after planting. If you planted in the fall you should fertilize. You should fertilize 2 or 3 times a year.

Mulching helps conserve water, increase organic matter and helps control weeds. Blueberries grow more vigorously and produce more if they are mulched.

Good weed control is critical as weeds compete for water light and nutrients and can seriously limit growth. As the plants mature pruning will be necessary to encourage growth and help with harvesting.