

Highbush Blueberries



Cultural Requirements - Blueberries prefer an acid, well drained soil. Their shallow, compact root system makes regular irrigation a necessity. Mulching has proved beneficial on soils which are not ideal for blueberry growing. Fir sawdust or bark dust, applied to a depth of two to four inches, eliminates much of the need for cultivation and conserves moisture.

Fertility - For well balanced mineral soils with sawdust mulch not less than four inches deep, an application of 1/4 pound of Ammonium Sulfate per plant per year is ideal. It should be applied in early spring on the surface of the mulch in a broad ring around the plant. The size of the plant is not important.

On organic soils without a mulch, the addition of Phosphorus or Potassium or both may be more important than the addition of Nitrogen. Complete fertilizers, such as 5-10-10, are recommended for these soils.

Planting Instructions - Blueberries ultimately reach a height of six feet or more with a four foot spread or more. Therefore, the rows should be at least eight feet apart while no two plants should be closer than six feet, unless a dense hedge is desired.

The top of the root clump should be close to the surface if a mulch is used, or about four inches deep without mulch.

Fruit production - The early varieties begin ripening in June, and the late varieties in early August.

When planting two or three year old plants, the blossoms can be removed for a year or two to promote vegetative growth. Blueberries tend to over-bear rather than under-bear. Thinning of the blossoms will promote larger fruit and a healthier bush.

Pruning - After the plant has established itself, one may remove old tired wood that is loaded with too many fruit buds and too few leaf buds. Some of the thrifty vegetative wood may be removed to prevent the plant from becoming too sprawling or too high.

Blueberries become sweeter as they hang on the bush. The only possible reason to pick early, (as they turn blue), is to escape predatory birds. Home gardeners often protect their plants from birds with nets. A large plant may have 15 to 20 pounds of fruit and is worth protecting.

Blueberry Descriptions

Earliblue - Introduced from the New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station in 1952. Highbush; early season. First to ripen. Medium size, long, loose clusters of large, firm, light blue berries. Excellent sweet and mild flavor. Vigorous, erect bush with

bright red wood will grow 5 to 6 feet tall at maturity. Machine harvests well. Avoid poorly drained soil. Zones 5-7.

Hardy Blue Highbush; midseason. Medium size, very sweet, dark blue berries that are perfect for muffins and pancakes. Upright bush will grow to 4-6 feet at maturity. An established variety in the Pacific Northwest known for its heavy crops of superior flavored sweet berries. Adaptable to many soil types including heavier clay soils red fall colors. Zones 4-7

Blueray - Introduced from the New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station in 1955. Highbush; early midseason. This variety is an old favorite. Small, tight clusters of large, medium blue fruit. Soft, firm skin of Blueray resists cracking. Excellent quality berries with a sweet, slightly tart, aromatic flavor. Vigorous and very productive, this bush will grow 4 - 6 feet tall at maturity. Bright red wood in the winter. Tight clusters may discourage machine picking. Zones 4-7.

Bluecrop - Introduced in 1952. Highbush; midseason. Standards of excellence. Bluecrop is a leading commercial variety. Medium to large, open clusters of large, firm, crack resistant, light blue fruit. High quality fruit with good subacid flavor. Bluecrop is good for fresh eating, preserves, baking and freezing. Vigorous, upright growth, will reach 4 - 6 feet at maturity. Slender light red canes. Tends to overbear unless properly pruned. Bluecrop will grow well in most areas. Zones 4-7.

Bluejay - Early Midseason. This extremely vigorous variety will grow almost twice as fast as most other blueberries. Bluejay features ample crops of medium size, mild flavored berries that will stay on the bush for long periods without loss of fruit quality. Bluejay is a large bush, growing 6-7 feet tall with light green summer foliage, yellow-orange leaves in the fall, and bright yellow winter wood color. Zones 4-7.

Brigitta - Late. New release from Australia. This is an easy to grow blueberry that yields one of the highest quality berries available. The fruit is large, light blue, and firm with a crisp texture. Flavor is sweet with a slightly tart undertone. The berries have a very long shelf life, being stored for up to one month in the refrigerator with out losing their flavor. The Brigitta is slightly spreading with dark green foliage. Great for any garden. Zones 4-7.

Chandler - New for 2000-2001. With fruit the size of cherries and surpassingly delicious flavor, Chandler is clearly the world's largest blueberry. Another great feature that will provide you a bounty of fresh picked fruit for over six weeks is Chandler's long ripening season! The bush is vigorous with large, dark green foliage and a slightly spreading habit to 5-6 feet. Zone 4-7.

Darrow - Late. Darrow boast the second largest berries of all blueberry cultivars with some fruit actually reaching half-dollar size! The fruit is slightly flat, light blue, with a delightful tart flavor. The bush is quite vigorous, reaching 5-6 feet at maturity. Darrow

does not produce as heavily in the colder zones as it does in milder areas but the “blue ribbon” sized berries are worth the reduced yields. Zones 5-7.

Duke - Highbush; early season. Medium to large light blue berries. Mildly tart flavor. The Duke berry is very firm and retains its fresh quality longer than most other varieties. Blooms late but ripens early, protecting blossoms from late frosts. Heavy, consistent producer. Upright growth but branches will droop to the ground when laden with fruit. Yellow-orange foliage in the fall. Zone 4-7.

Elliott - Very Late. With this variety home gardeners can enjoy fresh berries clear through September. In northern areas, they consider Elliott their fall bearing blueberry. Bright burgundy colored wood accents the grey-green foliage and sky blue berries. The late bloom period misses most spring frost and the heavy bud set on Elliott assures the grower of bountiful crops. The berry can be quite tart unless picked fully ripe. Zones 4-7.

Jersey - One of the oldest and most widely grown of all varieties, Jersey is a favorite for home gardeners wanting an easy to grow, heavy producing late season variety. This bush grows quite large, often reaching 7 feet at maturity. The dark blue, small to medium sized fruit is very sweet and a favorite for baking. A reliable producer year after year. Zones 4-7

Jubilee - Midseason. Growing conditions can be tough in Mississippi. Jubilee has distinguished itself as one of the toughest, performing well in heavier soils through summer heat and sudden winter cold. We especially like the upright, compact bush and the easy-picking bountiful crops of sky-blue berries presented over the outer periphery 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 throughout the South and in California in areas that receive at least 500 chilling hours.

Legacy - This interesting new release from the USDA Blueberry Research Station keeps its leaves through the winter, offering a very different look for blueberries in the landscape. Foliage will turn bright orange in colder climates, but here on the West Coast the leaves stay green with the lighter fall hues. Legacy plants are vigorous, upright to 6 feet, and slightly spreading. Here in the Willamette Valley where Legacy has been tested for some time, pickers refer to it as the “Golden Bush” due to its heavy production. The berries are medium large, light blue with a robust blueberry flavor. Rated as one of the best flavored varieties in USDA trials. Zones 5-8

Misty - Early. Misty is one of the most attractive southern highbush varieties. The bright blue-green foliage provides a perfect contrast to the hot pink spring flowers and sky blue summer fruit. The berries are medium to large size and of excellent quality. In areas with a mild winter, Misty tends to be evergreen. Misty tends to have higher yields when planted with other blueberries. Misty only requires 150 chilling hours to set fruit, making Misty a great companion to Sunshine Blue. Zones 5-10.

Northland - Early Midseason. The most cold-hardy highbush variety grown. Reaches about 4 feet high and 4 feet wide at maturity. A very productive variety, often yielding over 20 pounds per bush when mature. The berries are dark blue and medium size, excellent for jams and baking because of their high sugar content. It is easy to grow and adaptable to many soil types. Northland's cold hardiness extends the area where highbush blueberries can be successfully raised. The bright yellow wood and compact shape fits well in the landscape, especially when grouped with other compact varieties like Bluetta, Bluegold or Patriot. Zones 3-7

Patriot - Early. Patriot was selected at the University of Maine for home gardeners requiring a cold hardy variety that would bear consistent crops of large sized fruit. Production is high, ranging between 10 and 20 pounds at maturity. The berries are dark blue and highly flavored. Patriot is a low growing, spreading bush to about 4 feet, revealing its partial lowbush parentage. It is adaptable to many soil types and will perform better in wetter soils than many other varieties. Patriot makes an excellent landscape variety with its showy white blooms in the spring, dark green summer foliage, and fiery orange fall color. Zone 3-7.

Sharpblue - Early. Sharpblue is the leading and most adaptable variety in low chill areas throughout the world. This stalky, vigorous bush can grow to over six feet in optimal sites. In milder zones with fewer than 500 chilling hours, Sharpblue will bloom and fruit almost year-round, and the bush will be nearly evergreen. The berries are dark blue, about the size of a dime, with excellent flavor and texture. We recommend Sharpblue in areas with mild winters where hard frosts are uncommon. Zone 7 to 10.

Spartan - Early. Spartan features one of the most attractive and best flavored berries of any cultivar. It is light blue, very large (often covering a quarter) with a delicious tangy sweet flavor. It is an easy to pick upright bush reaching 5-6 feet at maturity. The large glossy green leaves turn orange and yellow in the fall. Spartan can be particular about soil type requiring well-drained sandy loam with lots of organic matter. Zones 5-7.

Aurora - The latest ripening new release from Michigan State University, offering northern growers an opportunity to extend the fresh fruit season. Our observations here in Oregon find Aurora to have an extremely high yield capacity. The berries ripen over three to four pickings and average in size about 25% larger than Elliott with a slightly darker color. Aurora seems to be more resistant to cracking than most varieties. The postharvest problems that can plague Elliott do not seem to be apparent with Aurora. Aurora berries can be tart and must be harvested when fully ripe. Early reports indicate that the flavor is superior to Elliott. In controlled atmosphere storage studies, Aurora stored slightly longer than Elliott. We recommend Aurora for growers where a cold hardy, hand harvest berry is desired to extend the fresh market harvest season. Fall Creek™ is the exclusive licensed nursery for states west of the Mississippi River and Canadian provinces excluding British Columbia. Zone 5-8

Draper - An early mid-season cultivar, is highly productive with outstanding fresh market quality berries. Draper's machine harvest characteristics include exceptional firmness, concentrated ripening, and easy release of ripe fruit from loose clusters that bear fruit on a strong, small stature bush. The berries have excellent post-harvest color retention and superior shelf life. We believe that Draper may be a cultivar that can be consistently harvested mechanically and shipped fresh. Draper is recommended for both fresh and process growers desiring an improved machine harvested mid-season variety. Fall Creek™ is the exclusive licensed nursery for states west of the Mississippi River and Canadian provinces excluding British Columbia.

Liberty - A selection from a Brigitta x Elliott cross and seems to have inherited the best characteristics of both. First harvest is about a week before Elliott, ripening over two to three pickings. The berries are slightly flat with an attractive sky-blue color and outstanding firmness. Liberty is proving to be a fast growing upright bush, with strong potential for high yields during the establishment years. Testing in our trial blocks show good potential for mechanical harvest as the cluster is loose and ripe berries detach easily from the bush. The flavor is reminiscent of Brigitta but the production is notably better. Consistent high yields in Michigan indicate that the buds and wood of Liberty are tolerant to fluctuating late fall and spring temperatures and cold winters. We highly recommend Liberty for late season fresh and process markets. Fall Creek™ is the exclusive licensed nursery for states west of the Mississippi River and Canadian provinces excluding British Columbia.

Reka -A release from New Zealand, Reka is one of the fastest growing, most adaptable varieties we have evaluated. Reka grows well in a number of different soil types and is more tolerant of wet, heavier ground than many other varieties. Growers are especially enthusiastic about Reka's extreme production. The yield curve is quite steep, out-producing most others in the early years and surpassing most at maturity. Although it's found reasonable success in the fresh market, Reka is a preferred variety of process growers for its superior machine harvest characteristics and high yields.

Sunshine Blue - Midseason. For gardens from San Diego to Seattle, Sunshine Blue has it all. This semi-dwarf evergreen blueberry features a highly-branched compact habit to 3 feet tall. The showy hot pink flowers in spring yield 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 Southern California, but we find it is surprisingly cold hardy and a wonderful addition to our Northwest gardens. Zones 5-10.

Toro - Midseason. Every year Toro continues to amaze us with its striking, full, heavy clusters of giant sky blue fruit. It is almost impossible to walk by a fruit-laden Toro and not pick some of the delectable berries. Toro was named for its stocky, compact bush habit. While not as fast a grower as some of the other varieties, Toro is an outstanding ornamental blueberry. The flowers turn from hot pink to bright white and contrast nicely

with the bronze colored spring foliage. The deep green summer foliage turns to the brightest of reds in fall. Zones 4-7.

O'Neal - Very Early, Large, light blue fruit of terrific quality. Best flavor of the southern highbush. The bush is vigorous and upright to 6 feet. Foliage is an attractive grey-green in summer accented with red stems and branches. O'Neal has a suggested chilling requirement of 200-300 hours. Zones 7-9

Star - Currently the leading southern cultivar. It is strong growing, has dependable berry quality and ease of hand harvest, with most berries removed in the first two pickings. Drawbacks with Star are the susceptibility to botrytis during wet springs and fruit cracking with heavy rains during ripening. Recommended for commercial planting wherever Southern Highbush can be grown. Fall Creek™ is licensed to sell Star throughout the United States and is the exclusive licensed nursery for the western states.

Jewel – Jewel has become one of the leading varieties in California due to its site adaptability, exceptional growth, record yields and large quality fruit. First harvest is usually a few days after Star and lasts around four weeks. It should be planted with other midseason varieties for best pollination. Jewel is recommended for commercial production in areas of low to medium chill where early, high quality fruit is desired. Fall Creek™ is licensed to sell Jewel throughout the United States and is the exclusive licensed nursery for the western states.

Emerald - yields from California are setting production records. This highly productive variety will leaf and grow well despite supporting incredible crops of the largest Southern Highbush berries. Intermittent fall flowering does not appear to reduce the spring crop, although the very early spring bloom can be vulnerable in areas of early spring frosts. The long harvest period requires multiple pickings but the mild-flavored fruit keeps its size well throughout harvest. We highly recommend Emerald for commercial plantings in all climates where it is suited. Fall Creek™ is licensed to sell Emerald throughout the United States and is the exclusive licensed nursery in the western states.

Southmoon - is one of the earlier Florida releases that is performing well in the West in suitable sites with adequate pruning. In Florida's exacting climate, mortality has been a problem, but this has not been an issue in California when planted in suitable soils. Southmoon's berries are some of the prettiest we have ever seen, and the eating quality supports their appearance. The berries ripen about 14 days after Star, with peak harvest after Memorial Day in California. We recommend Southmoon for limited commercial plantings, particularly in lighter sandy soil. Chilling requirement is listed at 500 hours. Fall Creek™ is licensed to sell Southmoon throughout the United States and is the exclusive licensed nursery in the western states.

Hardy Half-High Blueberries

Northsky - Developed at the University of Minnesota. Small to medium, light blue fruit with dusty bloom. (Smaller than Northblue). Excellent wild blueberry flavor that is superior to most highbush varieties. Low spreading bush with dense foliage. 12-18 inches tall and can get to 24-36 inches wide. Small dark green leaves turn red in the fall. Yields 1-2 pounds per bush.

Home garden variety for areas with severely cold winters, but abundant snow cover. Grows well in zones 3-7.

Northblue - Introduced from the University of Minnesota in 1973. Plump, sweet, and firm navy blue fruit. Very good quality fruit with a wild blueberry flavor that is superior to most highbush varieties. With refrigeration will store well. Plant will grow 20 - 30 inches tall. Large, dark green leaves will turn red in the fall. Can yield 3 - 7 pounds per bush if snow cover is adequate for winter protection. Ripens in mid July. Hardy to -35 degrees F. and in zones 3 - 7.

Northcountry - Introduced from the University of Minnesota. Medium size sky blue fruit with little or no picking scar. Mild and sweet wild blueberry flavor. Good quality. Tough and vigorous plants will grow 18 - 24 inches tall and 30 - 40 inches wide. Yields 2 - 7 pounds per plant. Production is best when snow protection is adequate. Ripens about 5 days before Northblue. Recommended for commercial use. Hardy to -35 degrees F. Zones 3-7

Top Hat - A perfect name for this dwarf cultivar, growing to about 1 ½ feet high and wide. Plentiful white blooms in spring give way to pea sized light blue berries. Top Hat is perfect for defined plantings or growing in pots. Excellent Bonsai Subject. Zones 3-7.

Burgundy - A standout selection from Maine with distinctive gray-green foliage, burgundy new growth, and light blue berries in the summer. Growth is compact, to about 3 feet wide by one foot tall. Deep burgundy fall color.

Brunswick-The Brunswick Blueberry, 'Vaccinium angustifolium 'Brunswick', is a variety that has small, sky blue berries that are firm and flavorful. It is a lowbush variety that makes a 1 - 2 feet dense ground cover if planted in groups. The beautiful densely foliated plant turns brilliant red or orange in the fall. The flavor is similar to wild blueberries. The Brunswick Blueberry was originally from Nova Scotia but grows vigorously in zones 3 - 6 here in the U.S. It likes an organically rich, medium to wet, well-drained soil in full sun to part shade. Annual pruning is not necessary but they do respond well if two-thirds of the growth is sheared back every second or third year in late winter. Although blueberries are self-fertile, cross-pollination produces the best fruit crop. Blueberries are delicious, exceptionally nutritious, high in bioflavanoids. Blueberries are a delicious [gourmet treat](#) that may be eaten fresh or used in cobbler, cake, sauce, jam, jelly or syrup. Birds love blueberries so be sure to plant enough to share!