



# Blueberries

What more could a gardener ask for - a plant that is not only easy to care for, but is also a beautiful ornamental that will reward you with wonderful fruit! Our climate and soils are perfect for growing this versatile plant. As an ornamental, try blueberries in the landscape as a hedge or border, or even in mass plantings. Their beautiful fall color is followed by colorful bare twigs of red or yellow in the winter. A mass of light pink or white flowers add to their ornamental value in the spring.

To plant, choose a site for your plants that have full sun exposure. Blueberries can tolerate some shade, but in too much shade, the vigor of the plant and fruit production decline. Plants should be spaced 4 to 6 feet apart. Most varieties grow 5 to 6 feet tall.

The soil should be acidic, with ample organic matter to maintain high moisture content throughout summer. Most soils in this area can be amended by adding lots of organic matter, preferably over an area of at least 4 X 4 feet around each plant, rather than just in the planting hole. Amend soils with peat moss or compost. These amendments can also be used as mulch. Applying a light mulch on top of the soil annually will protect roots from big fluctuations in moisture and temperature and also retard weed growth.

Blueberries are easy to care for. Like rhododendrons, they like even soil moisture. A little summer watering is normally needed, since they have shallow roots. Fertilization should be light unless new shoot growth is less than 1 ft. per year. Use a rhododendron fertilizer in February or March. Plants will need more nitrogen if fresh sawdust or bark has been used as a mulch.

Pruning should be minimal. Always prune out any dead wood. Thin out some of the older growth every few years in February or March. Prune to encourage new wood, which will be the most productive, particularly two and three year old stems. Pests are few, but berry-eating birds can be a problem. Cover your plants with netting as needed.

Harvesting blueberries is the fun part. All the berries on each plant don't ripen at the same time, so each berry needs to be individually picked. Ripe berries hold well on the plant as long as birds (or two-legged critters!) don't get them. You can eat them fresh or make jams and jellies. Blueberries last very well in the freezer; frozen berries 2 years or older will still be of reasonable quality.

When you select plants, choose more than 2 different varieties for better pollination. You can spread your harvest season out by selecting varieties that ripen either early, mid, or late season.



**VALLEY NURSERY, INC.**  
Great Plants • Great People

Poulsbo, WA 98370  
360-779-3806  
[www.valleynurseryinc.com](http://www.valleynurseryinc.com)