



## Growing Guide for Blueberries

Blueberries are long lived, native plants that are well suited to the soils and growing conditions in New Hampshire. Blueberries are easy to grow and provide plentiful, nutritious fruit high in anti-oxidants.

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<b>Light</b>	Full sun, no less than 8 hours:
<b>Soil: (pH)</b>	Most soil types that are well drained; pH 4.5 to 5.0.
<b>Zone:</b>	4-7
<b>Moisture:</b>	1 inch/week (very sensitive to drying out when young)
<b>Fertilizer:</b>	2-12 oz. 7-7-7 or ammonium nitrate/ plant depending on age; apply in the spring
<b>Plant Height:</b>	dwarf-7'
<b>Pollination:</b>	self-pollinating, but two different varieties will increase yield

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### Varieties

Patriot	Bluejay
Bluecrop	Pink Lemonade
Blueray	Chandler
Blue Gold	Jersey
Peach Sorbet	Duke
Earliblue	Northland
Polaris	Sweetheart
Jelly Bean (dwarf)	Midnight Cascade dwarf
Perpetua (dwarf)	Peach Sorbet (dwarf)
Pink Icing (dwarf)	Silver Dollar (dwarf)

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### Plant Care





Although blueberries will grow in a semi shaded environment, they will be more fruitful with 6+ hours of sunlight. Blueberries grow best in a well-drained sandy loam, with plenty of organic matter. Clay soils can be improved by adding organic matter (peat moss and compost) and sand. Blueberries require an acid soil with a pH range of 4.5 to 5.0. Have a soil test done to determine the soil pH. If it is too high, sulfur or aluminum sulfate may be recommended to reduce it to optimal levels. This is critical, since the plants will not adequately take up nutrients. Plants are generally spaced 5' apart. Provide adequate moisture during the entire growing season. Young plants suffer stress without proper moisture levels. Mulch (old saw dust, pine needles, wood chips) applied around the plants will protect plant roots and help retain moisture. Weeds in the planting area should be removed since they compete with the blueberries for food and water. Blueberries are shallow rooted and will be damaged if cultivated too deeply. In today's market, many blueberry varieties are being developed that will grow well in containers. Much of the care is the same, but pay extra attention to water and fertilizer needs.

### **Pruning**

Little pruning is required on young bushes. Remove dead or diseased branches and remove flower buds for the first two years to promote vegetative growth. Leave 2-3 strong canes which will become strong fruiting wood. After the third year, begin pruning on an annual basis in the spring. Fruit buds are produced on vigorous 1 year old wood. Remove any weak, spindly branches to ground level and maintain 6-8 strong canes and 1-3 new shoots. The new shoots will act as replacement canes as older canes become unproductive. Try to maintain canes that are no more than 8 years old. Older canes that are 1 inch or more in diameter should be removed and replaced with new shoots. Detail pruning may be necessary to remove dead fruiting branches from the previous season. Be sure to leave any branches that have fat buds on the tips and small shoots. If pruning an old blueberry plant, remove the oldest canes first, but not more than 20% of the entire bush. Try to remove the canes close to the center first so light can penetrate the interior of the plant and promote new shoot development. Remember to cut the canes as close to the ground as possible to discourage disease.

### **Fertilizer**

Apply fertilizer in the spring after the ground has thawed. Blueberries prefer fertilizer that has been formulated for acid loving plants. Formulations such as 7-7-7, ammonium sulfate, or Hollytone are good choices. The amount of fertilizer to be applied depends on the age of the plant. General guides are provided on the product package. The soil pH should be maintained below 5.0 to allow for maximum fertilizer uptake.

### **Insects and Diseases**

Blueberries have few disease and insect problems. It is useful to monitor the plants to see if any insects or diseases are present. If problems do arise, sprays may be necessary. A general





purpose spray applied according to the label directions should control most problems. Sometimes sticky traps are used to attract the blueberry maggot.

### **Bird Control**

Birds are a pest in blueberry plantings and an effective control is netting. The netting should be used as soon as the first berries begin to turn blue. PVC or metal pipe frames can be constructed to create a walk-in cage.

### **Harvest, Storage and Use**

For best flavor, wait a few days after the fruit turns blue, and the berries literally fall off of the bush with little help. Blueberries can be harvested when they first turn blue, but flavor will not continue to develop after harvest. Blueberries can be stored for up to 2 weeks, with cool temperatures and high humidity. If you plan on storing blueberries, they should be harvested a little early. If you do not net your shrubs, the birds will beat you to them!

For more detailed information, use the following link:

[https://extension.unh.edu/resources/files/Resource000578\\_Rep600.pdf](https://extension.unh.edu/resources/files/Resource000578_Rep600.pdf)

<https://extension.unh.edu/blog/new-growing-blueberries>

<https://extension.unh.edu/blog/new-growing-blueberries>

<https://extension.unh.edu/resource/growing-fruits-wild-lowbush-blueberries-fact-sheet>

<https://www.mygardenlife.com/recipes-edibles/pollination-charts-for-fruit-bearing-trees-and-shrubs>

