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How to Grow Blueberries: The Complete Guide



Blueberries are one of the easiest fruits to grow.

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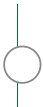
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Bloom Time: [Spring](#), [Summer](#)

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Planting, Growing, Pruning, and Harvesting Blueberries

By [Catherine Boeckmann](#)
Last Updated: April 9, 2025



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Plump and juicy blueberries are more than just delicious. They're high in nutrients, antioxidants, fiber, and vitamins. Fortunately, with very little effort, blueberries are easy to grow—if you have the right soil conditions. See our Blueberry Growing Guide to learn how to plant, care for, prune, and harvest your blueberry bushes.

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Did you know that the modern blueberry is a 20th-century invention? Before the 1900s, the only way to enjoy these North American natives was to find them in the wild. Then, scientists started to unlock the secrets of cultivating blueberries—and we're glad they did!

- A relative of [rhododendron](#) and [azalea](#), blueberry bushes are a great fruiting plant; they're also an attractive addition to your overall landscape, offering scarlet fall foliage and bell-shaped creamy-white spring flowers.
- Plus, blueberries are one of nature's superfoods, crammed with essential nutrients, minerals and health-boosting polyphenols.

Types of Blueberries

There are four types of blueberries: **high-**

eye.

The most commonly planted blueberry is the highbush. Most blueberry breeding has focused on this species, so there are many varieties that range widely in cold hardiness and fruit season, size, and flavor. (Read more about blueberry varieties below.)

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- [Growing Blueberries: A Plant for All Seasons](#)
- [Unusual Fruit and Fruit Trees to Grow](#)

PLANTING

When to Plant Blueberry Bushes


- Blueberries can be planted in spring or also in late fall in all but the coldest regions. In Zones 5 and below, it's best to wait until early to mid-spring to plant.
- If available, 1- to 3-year-old plants are a good choice. These can be bought in containers or bare-root. In either case, buy from a reputable nursery or website.

Choosing and Preparing a Planting Site

- Select a sunny, sheltered spot. While blueberries tolerate shade, better crops are obtained in the sun. At the same time, they should not be exposed to harsh, drying winds.
- Don't plant blueberries too close to trees, as the trees will block out sunlight and suck up any moisture in the soil.
- If planting multiple bushes, it's best to plant them in a group rather than scattered throughout your garden. This will

- Blueberries are a shallow-rooted plant. Therefore, they require soil that holds moisture but also drains well and doesn't stay wet. Don't plant blueberries in sites with heavy, clayey soils that stay wet.
- Blueberries thrive in soil that is acidic. The [soil pH](#) should ideally be between 4.0 and 5.0; soil that isn't acidic enough will stunt growth. Soil can be acidified by mixing a small amount of granulated sulfur into the soil several months before planting. Peat moss and pine bark or needles are also good additions that will help acidify your soil.
- Mix organic matter into the soil before you set your blueberry bushes. (See more about [preparing soil for planting](#).)

Make the Most of Your Available Space
See how many plants will fit and which crops can occupy the same space in your garden at different times of the year.



Blueberry (7 plants) - row length: 21' 9"

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How to Plant Blueberry Bushes

- Tip: Be careful not to plant them too deeply. The rootball should be just below the surface (one-quarter to one-half inch).
- Dig holes about 20 inches deep and 18 inches wide (or about twice as wide and twice as deep as the plant's roots).

- Space bushes 4–5 feet apart in a row, with at least 8 feet between rows. Prepare a planting mixture of 2 parts loam and one part oak leaf mold, peat moss, aged sawdust, or compost, and place a layer of this mixture in the bottom of the hole.
- Set the bush in the hole with the rootball just below the surface with its roots spread out. Pack the hole tightly with the soil.
- Apply fertilizer one month after planting, not at the time of planting. Apply ½ ounce of a 10-10-10 fertilizer in a band around the plant 6 to 12 inches from the crown.

GROWING

How to Care for Blueberry Bushes

- Mulch is essential for keeping shallow blueberry root systems moist. After planting, apply a 2- to 4-inch layer of wood chips, sawdust, or pine needles around the bush, but leave a gap around the trunk to allow for proper airflow.
- Blueberries need 1 to 2 inches of water per week.
- **Warning:** Blueberries are a favorite snack

you protect blueberry bushes ahead of time by draping bird netting over your plants.

- One year after planting, apply 1 ounce of 10-10-10 fertilizer per bush in the spring when they bloom, and increase the rate by 1 ounce each year thereafter to a maximum of 8 ounces for mature bushes.
- Do not allow the bush to produce fruit for the first year or two after planting. This will allow the plant to use its energy to become well-established in its new home instead.
- Pinch back any blossoms developing on newly set plants to allow the energy to go to growth.

How to Prune Blueberry Bushes

- For the first 4 years or so after planting, blueberry bushes do not need to be pruned. From then on, pruning is needed to stimulate the growth of the new shoots that will bear fruit the following season.
- Prune plants in late winter or early spring before new growth begins.
- Cut out dead, broken, short, weak, and spindly shoots.
- On highbush varieties, begin with large cuts, removing wood that is more than six years old, drooping to the ground, or

move low-growing branches whose fruit will touch the ground, as well as spindly twigs.

- Prune lowbush blueberries by cutting all stems to ground level. Pruned plants will not bear the season following pruning, so prune a different half of a blueberry patch every 2 years (or a different third of a patch every 3 years).

Video: How to Grow and Prune Blueberry Bushes

... Blueberries From Planting to Harvest



Types

Blueberries are partially self-fertile, so you will harvest more and larger berries by planting two or more varieties together. Planting more than one variety can also extend the harvest season.

Highbush (*Vaccinium corymbosum*): A six-foot shrub hardy from **Zone 4 to Zone 7**.

- For withstanding cold winters, choose

or 'Meader'.

- For big berries, choose 'Berkeley', 'Bluecrop', 'Blueray', 'Coville', 'Darrow', or 'Herbert'.
- For flavor, usually, the main reason for growing your own fruit, choose 'Blueray', 'Darrow', 'Herbert', 'Ivanhoe', 'Pioneer', 'Stanley', or 'Wareham'.
- For something different, try 'Pink Lemonade', which produces bright pink blueberries!

Lowbush (*Vaccinium angustifolium*): For the coldest climates, lowbush varieties are your best bet, hardy from **Zone 3 to Zone 7**.

- These are the blueberries you find in cans on supermarket shelves. When fresh, the fruits are sweet and covered with a waxy bloom so thick that the berries appear sky blue or gray.
- The creeping plants, a foot or so high, are spread by underground stems, or rhizomes. They blanket the rocky upland soils of the Northeast and adjacent portions of Canada. Lowbush blueberries make a nice ornamental fruiting ground cover.
- Plants sold by nurseries are usually seedlings or unnamed wild plants rather than named varieties.

Half-High: Breeders have combined qualities of highbush and lowbush blueberries into hybrids known as half-high blueberries.

- The University of Minnesota introductions include ‘Northcountry’, a variety that grows 18 to 24 inches high and has excellent, mild-flavored, slightly aromatic sky-blue fruits; and ‘Northblue’, which grows 20 to 30 inches high and produces an abundance of dark-blue, nickel-size, somewhat tart fruits—just right for pies.
- ‘Northland’ is a half-high that grows 3 to 4 feet tall. From Michigan, it has relatively bland, average-quality fruit.

Blueberries for Southern Gardens (Zones 7–9):

- **Rabbiteye (*Vaccinium virgatum*):** Grown in the southeastern United States, rabbiteye varieties are extremely adaptable, productive, and pest-tolerant. They do, however, have a high degree of self-incompatibility and require two or more varieties to be planted together to ensure pollination. Recommended varieties include ‘Powderblue’, ‘Woodard’, and ‘Brightwell’.
- **Southern Highbush (hybrids of *V. virga-***

Southern highbush varieties tend to be pickier and harder to grow than rabbiteyes, but there are a few high-quality varieties that do well. Among these are 'Emerald', 'Windsor', and 'Springhigh'.

- Read more about blueberries for southern gardens from the University of Florida: [Blueberry Gardener's Guide](#).

HARVESTING

How to Harvest Blueberries

- Blueberries are typically ready for picking between June and August.
- Don't rush to pick the berries as soon as they turn blue. Wait a couple of days. When they are ready, they should fall off right into your hand.
- If you plant 2-year-old blueberry bushes, they should start to bear within a year or two. (Pick off any flowers that form the first year or two after planting to allow the bush to become established.) Be aware that full production is only reached after about 6 years (depending on variety).

How to Store Blueberries

- Blueberries are one of the easiest fruits to freeze. Learn how to [freeze blueberries](#) so



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PESTS/DISEASES

- [Birds](#)
- Blueberry Maggot
- [Powdery Mildew](#)

Potting and Repotting

Can You Grow Blueberries in

Yes! In fact, blueberries grown in containers are easier to protect from birds and other critters, more disease-resistant, easy to harvest, and easy to move if needed. Plus, if you live in an area without acidic soil, growing blueberries in containers allows you to tailor the soil pH specifically for them.

Here's how to do it:

- Use a large container with drainage holes.
- Use a potting mix designed for acid-loving plants such as azaleas or rhododendrons, or mix sandy soil with peat moss and compost.
- Plant the bush in the container and water the bush well.
- Add mulch on top of the soil to keep in moisture.
- Place the pot in a sunny spot.
- Keep soil moist.
- In northern regions, overwinter the blueberry container in a protected area, cover it with straw, or wrap it in burlap.

Blueberry Varieties for Containers

- **'Top Hat'**: Bred by the Michigan State University for small spaces and containers.
- **'Pink Lemonade'**: Pink blueberries contain genetics from rabbiteye blueberries (a

berries can be planted in nearly every climate.

- **‘Pink Champagne’**: Another pink variety that is full of antioxidants and sweeter than other blueberries.



‘Pink Lemonade’ blueberries

WIT AND WISDOM

- In Ireland, baskets of blueberries are still offered to a sweetheart to commemorate of the original fertility festival of Lammas Day, celebrated on August 1.
- Blueberries are one of the few naturally blue foods on earth.
- For centuries, Native Americans gathered “star berries” (the blossom end of each berry forms the shape of a perfect five-pointed star) from forests and fields and ate them fresh or dried them for later use.
 - Dried blueberries were added to stews, soups, and meats.
 - Dried berries were also crushed into a

for flavor.

- Blueberry juice was used to cure coughs.
- Blueberry juice was also used as a purple dye for cloth and baskets.
- A tea made from the leaves of the blueberry plant was believed to be good for the blood.
- Tired of blueberries? Try growing another berry in your garden, such as [strawberries](#), [raspberries](#), or [blackberries](#)!

RECIPES

LEMON BLUEBERRY MUFFINS

BLUEBERRY JELLY ROLL

BLUEBERRY CRUMBLE

BLUEBERRY JAM

**CRÈME FRAÎCHE-BLUEBERRY ICE
CREAM**

FRUIT

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Catherine Boeckmann



Catherine Boeckmann loves nature, stargazing, and gardening so it's not surprising that she and The Old Farmer's Almanac found each other. She leads digital content for the Almanac website, and is also a certified master gardener in the state of Indiana. [Read More from Catherine Boeckmann](#)

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COMMENTS

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Nicole Byrd (not verified) 10 months 3 weeks ago

Is there a certain time of the day you should pick blueberries??? I've heard morning, that they sweeter!! Is the true? I want what's best

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REPLY**The Editors** 10 months 3 weeks ago

Hi, Nicole,

You can pick blueberries in early in the morning after dew has evaporated, or after temperatures have cooled toward the end of the day as evening approaches. At these times, the berries may be firmer and store a little longer. Higher temperatures make berries softer, affecting quality; some blueberry varieties soften more quickly than others as the temperature goes up. After harvesting, keep berries cool.

Also, picking berries with dew or rainfall on them can affect quality—wait until the berries have dried.

Sweetness is more a factor of such things as the variety, growing conditions (such as enough sun, not too much moisture, enough soil nutrients, pH of around 4.0 to 5.0), and ripeness. For peak sweetness, wait 3 to 4 days after a blueberry turns blue to harvest it.

Hope this helps!

REPLY

Anne (not verified) 1 year 2 months ago

There are four types of blueberries: highbush, low-bush, hybrid half-high, and rabbiteye. We used to harvest lowbush Blueberries in the Maine wild. :)~

REPLY

Amar Choudhary (not verified) 2 years 8 months ago

I have seen your post. It is very helpful for me. I came to know the benefits of Blueberry. Keep Posting these types of Posts. Thank you.

REPLY

camilo salazar (not verified) 2 years 8 months ago

? were can I buy or get abluberry plants

REPLY

They should be available at local garden centers—or there are a number of online retailers which may ship to you.

REPLY

Heather (not verified) 2 years 10 months ago

Hi, I planted 3 blueberry plants, one survived its first year pretty well. The other 2 the upper plant seemed to die, but i have growth coming from the roots. Is this still a live blueberry plant or is the root from some other type of plant? I have been letting them grow and they are getting bigger, however the leaves are definitely a different shape than the plant that lived.

REPLY

The Editors 2 years 9 months ago

Hi, Heather, If the leaf does not look like blueberry foliage, it doesn't sound promising. You could let it grow for a while to confirm and/or bring the leaves to a local nursery and see if an expert there can identify it. As for the plants in general, we've found that improper soil, and in particular the soil's pH, are often

might want to do a soil test. Wishing you
better luck next time!

REPLY

Annealice (not verified) 2 years 10 months ago

Start with high-quality plants. This is the most important step in ensuring a successful crop of blueberries. Look for disease-resistant varieties that are well-suited to your climate zone.

REPLY

Kimberly Rinehardt (not verified) 2 years 12 months ago

I have small webbing on blue berry bush eats leaf then branch and kills it also on grant grey beard bush or smoke bush they cut top out of it

REPLY

MORE COMMENTS

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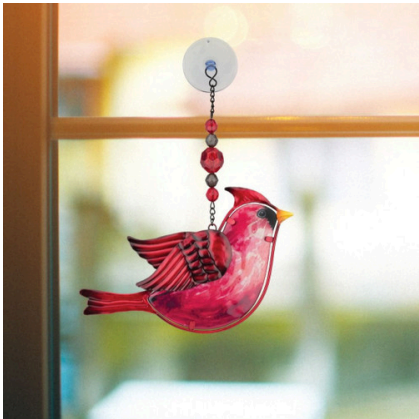
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