

# How To Grow Awesome Blueberries in Containers - Living Homegrown



Perhaps you have dreams of running outside in your PJs every morning for a quick fix of fresh blueberries from your very own garden? After all, they are delicious, high in antioxidants and a wonderful addition to your morning oatmeal, right? Well they are all of those things and you can have them in your own backyard – you just need to grow them in acid soil.

But if you are like me and only have alkaline soil in your backyard, then the solution is to grow your blueberries in containers. It works great and my kids are now the ones running out in their PJs (or something less appropriate) to grab a handful when the plants are in full swing.

## Keeping Blueberries in Their “Happy Place”

To be happy, blueberries need to grow in an acidic pH zone of 4.5 to 5.5. Growing in containers makes this a fairly easy process. You control the pH by using acid potting soil, and feeding them with acid fertilizer. Not that tough. But there is more...



## My #1 Secret to Success:

After growing blueberries in containers for 15 plus years, I have learned that there are a few tricks to the process because sometimes I had success and sometimes not.

Here's the thing – all the books and blogs will tell you to just plant in an acid soil mix and feed “occasionally”. But I have learned that you have to be a bit more diligent than that.

Sure it works for the first season. But after the first year, the acidity in the soil tends to diminish because the containers are watered a lot and frankly a lot of the acidity washes out. So I have found that from the second year on, you need to feed lightly but more often. In fact, I feed pretty much every month during the growing season to keep that acidity level up.

**Now, let me be clear: I am not saying to over fertilize your blueberries!** I am saying that instead of one big feeding at the beginning of the season and nothing else, I do a half feeding to start and then give lower doses throughout the growing season to keep the acidity up. It is basically the same amount of fertilizer but given in smaller doses rather than one giant dose at the beginning. Make sense? Also, they do NOT like tons of nitrogen (or you get leaf growth with no fruit). I'm just talking about the organic matter you add to keep the pH level in “their zone”. Don't over feed with general fertilizer you will have the most lush (non-fruiting) blueberry bush in the neighborhood.

Don't worry, this light monthly feeding is not as difficult or time consuming as it sounds. I am just talking about a small handful of cottenseed meal (or other organic acid food) sprinkled over the top of the soil and watered in.



Easy! And you will be rewarded with a great crop! Think of it as paying rent! You pay the plants on the first of every month and they will reward you with lots of yumminess! See below for my full regime.



Here my blueberries are growing in a red container blended into my edible landscape. I can move the container as I need to.

## Tips for growing container blueberries:

- Pick compact varieites such as TopHat or Sunshine Dwarf.
- Even if they say you don't need a pollinator, grow at least 2. You just get more berries that way.
- Plant initially in acid loving soil (the kind bagged for azalias and hydrangeas)
- Grow in Full Sun. (They can grow in less sun, but you get the most fruit in full sun.)
- Choose a large container – but you can always start smaller and pot up as the plants grow.
- Always use Organic Fertilizer – you are going to eat the fruit and don't want chemicals in your food.
- If you can, mulch the pot in the summer months with acid producing mulch such as pine needles, pine bark or true cypress.
- The first year, feed every few months (as directed on the package of your brand of organic fertilizer). You can use a commercial organic blend or a light sprinkling of cottonseed meal or feather meal.
- The second year and all subsequent years, feed lightly but monthly with cottonseed meal, feather meal or an organic blend from your local independent garden center.

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#### About the Author:



Theresa Loe is the founder of **Living Homegrown®** and the **Canning Academy®** and is the Co-Executive Producer & Canning Expert on the national PBS gardening series, **Growing A Greener World®**. Theresa homesteads on just 1/10th of an acre in Los Angeles with her husband, two teenage boys and several disorderly but totally adorable chickens. Learn more about [Living Homegrown here](#) and about the [Canning Academy here](#).