

DID YOU KNOW...



THE BLUEBERRY

Blueberries are one of the few North American fruit species and have a colorful history dating back to pre-colonial times. The blueberry was collected and used by the Natives for centuries before the arrival of the settlers of Europe.

The blueberry was sacred to the Natives in part because the end of the berry was in the shape of a five-pointed star. The Natives believed that the berries were sent by the Great Spirit during a great famine to relieve their children's hunger. When the English settlers arrived in America, they tried to implement English farming practices. Associated with an attempt at community life, this proved disastrous.

The New England settlers almost died of hunger until the Natives interfered and taught them how to preserve fruit during the winter. The blueberries used by the Natives were indigenous. Today most of the blueberries that are grown are the variety that grows in the bushes that were domesticated in the early 20th century by Elizabeth White and Dr. Frederick Coville. Since then, the culture has been so successful that America participates in more than 90% of the world's production.

HIGHBUSH OR LOWBUSH BLUEBERRY?

HIGHBUSH BLUEBERRY

Highbush blueberries are less resistant to cold but more tolerant to heat. They grow much higher than Lowbush varieties and grow like a real bush. The height varies according to the different varieties and can reach up to 12 feet. The fruits will be of a good size and of very good quality. Size, flavor, and texture may vary considerably according to the different cultivars.

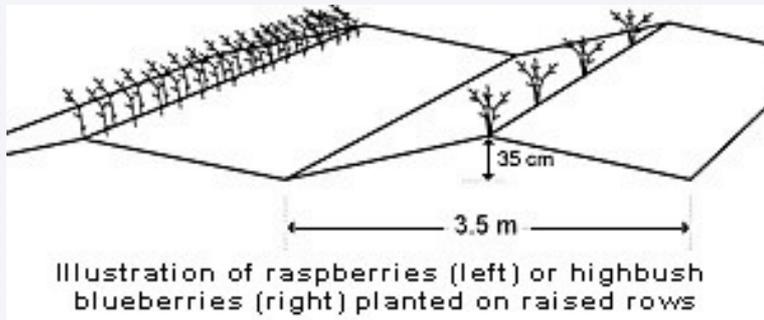


LOWBUSH BLUEBERRY

Lowbush blueberries are found in the northern and therefore they are less tolerant to the heat. The plant reaches about 45 cm making it an excellent ground bush. It can, therefore, be used in landscaping as an ornamental floor bush. Blueberries tend to be medium-sized but sweet and intensely tasty.

BLUEBERRY'S SITE PREPARATION

Highbush blueberries are not very hardy, fruit buds will be damaged when winter temperature goes below -32°C . Good orchard sites on the hills and mountains slopes remain the best sites for high bush blueberry culture.



Success is possible on well-sheltered sites protected from the wind or with low type varieties combined with a good snow cover. In that last possibility, fruits will be set in the 65cm near the ground and pruning will be conducted accordingly.

Blueberries have requirements that differ from most cultivated plants. Ideally set in an acid sandy soil with an ideal pH of 4.8. Others soil type can be amended with organic products like peat, or composted barks, to modify the structure. Before planting dig a ditch along the row length and filled with peat moss. With a rototiller, mix the peat and ground together. If the site has the drainage issue, put the peat on top of the ground, rototill and shape a hill to facilitate drainage.



HIGHBUSH BLUEBERRY'S PLANTING AND MAINTENANCE

Plant highbush at 1.3-1.5 m on the row and 2.5-3.0 m between rows. To favor cross-pollination and increase fruit setting and size, it is advisable to plant 3 different varieties. Plant deeper so the base of the plants is covered by the ground for the first 5 to 8 cm. Thorough irrigation is needed after planting.

Blueberries are naturally found on poor grounds. A common mistake is to damage them by over fertilization. Do not supply fertilizer at planting, but do so two weeks later. For small plantings, apply (30-10-10) done with ammonium sulfate. For commercial plantings apply 25gr per plant of ammonium sulfate (21-0-0) on a radius of 30 to 60 cm around each plant. Start fertilizing end of April or early in May. Repeat every 3 weeks, but no later than early July, especially if a sawdust mulch is used. Increase the dosage gradually as the planting matures without exceeding 100-125 gr. per plant per year. In the end of summer and in the fall, apply potassium and magnesium sulfate (SulPoMag) in the same dosage.



Water supply is the main factor of success, so keep a constant humidity. On the other end will not tolerate water excess or shortage. A sawdust mulch is strongly suggested, Ramial chipped wood is also suggested. A mulch cover of 5 à 8 cm is well indicated. An irrigation system must be set up for plantation time. For the first two seasons removed flowers to boost growth. After 3 to 4 years prune at the end of the winter removing the oldest branches at the bottom of the ground. For a top fruit quality harvest only once a week. Bird's netting and deer fences are suggested if a nuisance. At the end of harvest season starts spreading bait station to control rodents, and keep at it all along winter.

LOWBUSH BLUEBERRY'S SELECTION AND SITE PREPARATION

Lowbush blueberries have the same requirement for the soil than the highbush. Although it is found in more northern latitude tannins southern cousin, it is considered less hardy.

Lowbush really need snow over to survive or are very thick mulch. With its limited height 30-40 cm, this requirement is easily met.



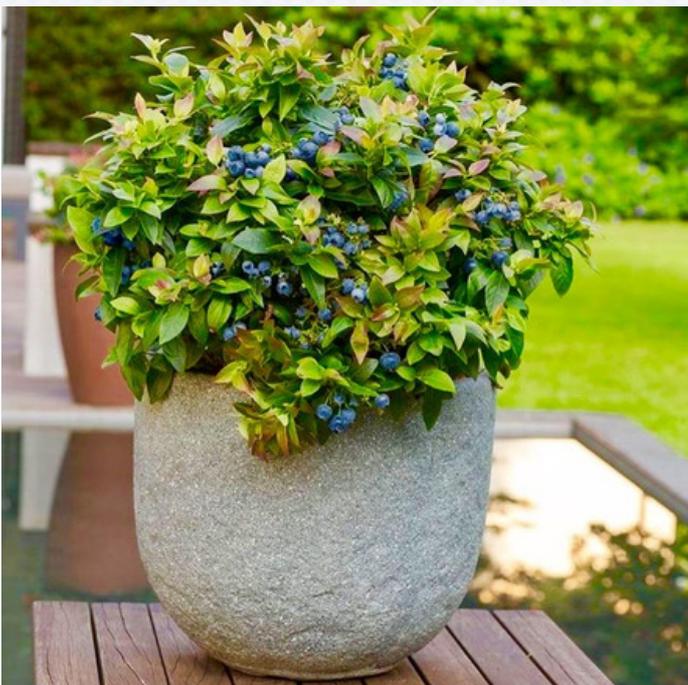
LOWBUSH BLUEBERRY'S PLANTING AND MAINTENANCE

As for planting and maintenance, proceed as for highbush blueberries. The dwarf type is planted 40-60 cm on rows spaced 1.5M apart. After a few years, when the plants are not vigorous, cut the dwarf blueberries to a level with a pruning shears or pruning shears. A season without production will follow, but future harvests will be even greater.



HIGHBUSH BLUEBERRY'S CONTAINER CULTURE

Container culture is gaining in popularity. Combined with an appropriate winter protection, this enables the use of varieties much less hardy but far more productive. Commercial substrate companies have designed knowledge to guide you in the choice of the best substrate. The substrate containing peat moss and composted bark have to be looked at.



If you intend to use compost or slow release fertilizer we advise caution. Blueberry root systems are fine and fragile, it lacks root hairs commonly found in other plants. That's what makes blueberry more dependant on irrigation and more sensitive to high salinity or too much fertilizer