

BLUEBERRIES



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Blueberries require a sunny location and well-drained soil. They will not perform well under dry conditions. To maintain proper soil moisture, use a 4" - 6" deep mulch of wood chips, cypress, shredded hardwood, or other organic mulch. Blueberries require a highly acidic soil. The pH should be somewhere in the range of 4.5 to 5.2. To obtain this level of acidity, plant blueberries in a mixture of 1/2 peat moss and 1/2 soil. In subsequent years, use an acid-type fertilizer.

In some cases, two varieties of blueberries should be planted for best cross pollination. See below for specific information.

A dormant spray of lime sulphur applied in the spring, just as the buds begin to swell, will help reduce disease. For further disease control, spray with captan when the leaf buds are green tipped and at petal fall. Although there are some insects that bother blueberries, the main pest will be birds. Use protective netting to reduce bird damage.

Harvest blueberries when they are fully blue. Pick the fruit when it is dry. Handle as little as possible to preserve the whitish, waxy surface. This wax protects the fruit from mold. Store blueberries at 34 - 40 degrees.

Old canes (3 - 4 years old) should be pruned out each year before spring growth. Normally, winter protection is not needed, although you may get few berries after a severely cold or low snowfall winter. If the area is frequented by rabbits, you will need to protect the plants with chicken wire during the winter.

Good varieties for Minnesota include:

NORTHBLUE: A 1983 University of Minnesota introduction. Stands 20" - 30" tall. Produces 3 - 7 pounds of fruit per plant. Large, attractive, dark blue, firm fruit. Good flesh flavor. Processed flavor is superior to old highbush varieties. Stores well. Dark red fall leaf color. Self-fruitful.

NORTHCOUNTRY: A 1988 University of Minnesota introduction. Stands 18" - 24" Widely spreading habit. Produces 2 - 5 pounds of fruit per plant. Sky blue, sweet, mild berries with a fresh flavor similar to wild blueberries. Ripens 5 days earlier than Northblue. Partially self-fruitful.

CHIPPEWA: 1996 University of Minnesota introduction. 30"-40" tall. Large, dark blue fruits. Also a good blueberry for the home gardener. Yield is similar to that of Northblue. Fruits are sweeter. Ripens one week earlier than Northblue. Self-fruitful.

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16800 Highway 55
Plymouth, MN 55446
763-559-4016

Dundee

FRIENDLY EXPERTS - LOCAL GROW-HOW

1150 Highway 7 East
Hutchinson, MN 55350
320-587-4664