

Blueberries

Comparing Northern and Southern High-bush Types.

Blueberry varieties are distinguished by their climate suitability and ripening season. In the Bay Area we can grow both Southern and Northern High Bush Blueberries; though it is our feeling that the best flavored fruit comes from the Northern varieties the Southern varieties have made some great improvements in flavor and their lower chill requirements result in larger crops year after year ("Chilling" is a measure of accumulated hours of temperatures below 45°F in the dormant season). You may want to select varieties that ripen at different times or feature large fruit (best for fresh eating and desserts) or small fruit (best for muffins and pancakes).

Northern High-bush are high chill varieties and the most widely planted blueberries which are popular with home gardeners throughout the Northern U.S. and Southern Canada. There are over 100 named varieties; we have selected the best for our Bay Area gardens which allow gardeners to select a combination that will produce delicious crops continuously over a long season. These varieties display bush shapes from short and compact to tall and open. Fall foliage colors and unique winter wood tones compliment gardens and home landscapes. The berries range in size from ¼" to over ½" in diameter and in color from almost black to light powder blue. Northern High-bush require a minimum of 800 chilling hours for optimum fruit set. All cultivars are self-pollinating but will produce better crops if more than one variety is planted.

Southern High-bush blueberries are low chill varieties (typically below 500 hours) that offer gardeners in California an opportunity to enjoy bountiful crops of blueberries just like their northern neighbors. Southern High-bush are specifically hybridized for superior fruit, soil adaptability, heat tolerance and low winter chill requirements. This makes them particularly suitable for coastal areas of California as well as the inland valleys. Most Southern High-bush are self-pollinating but the berries will be larger if two varieties are planted together.



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Blueberry Basics

The Right Start For Your Blueberries

Blueberries bring a unique combination of delicious fruit and striking ornamental beauty to the garden and landscape. Blueberries are easy to grow, require little care, and are seldom bothered by pests. If a few basic steps are followed, your blueberry plants can thrive and last a lifetime.

Site Selection and Preparation

Select a sunny location with well drained soil. Plant in an area where irrigation is available as best results will be obtained by keeping the root zone moist throughout the growing season. Where the soil is poor or marginally drained, raised beds 3-4 feet wide and 8-12 inches high work very well for blueberries.

The best way to grow blueberries in almost any soil is to incorporate an abundance of organic matter like a planting mix designed for acid loving plants. In our typically heavy clay soils, use one 1.5 cubic foot bag per plant. Be sure to incorporate the planting mix into a 30 inch wide and 12 inch deep planting hole; though this requires lots of work, this planting practice will help the plant thrive for years to come. Blueberries thrive in acidic soils; be prepared to apply a soil acidifier at least once a year.

Mulching

Blueberries do best with 2-4 inches of mulch over the roots to conserve moisture, prevent weeds, and add organic matter. Bark mulch, acid compost, sawdust, grass clippings, etc. all work well. Repeat every year.

Spacing

Blueberries can be planted as close as 2½ feet apart to form solid hedgerows or spaced up to 6 feet apart and grown as individual specimens.

More Uses for Blueberries

Whether you plant them for the birds, your children, or yourself, blueberries can work very well in your landscape plans. Blueberries have delicate bell shaped blooms in spring followed by glossy green leaves throughout summer, delicious powder blue to dark blue fruit, striking fall color, and brilliant winter wood. Listed below are the common uses and some varieties which are most suited for that use. Please remember that your success depends on proper planting and cultural care.

Hedges and Border Plantings

Blueberries make excellent hedges if planted correctly and the right varieties are used. To form solid hedges or screens, place plants 2½' to 3' apart; if uniform shape and texture is desired, use the same variety in the row. Most High-bush varieties are self-pollinating and do not require another variety to set fruit. For tall hedges, use the faster growing, upright varieties such as 'Jersey'. If a shorter hedge is desired, use the compact varieties such as 'Patriot' and plant 2½' apart.

Container Planting

If the soil type in your area is not suitable for blueberries or your growing space is limited to a deck or patio, container growing is an option. If you have the space for a wine barrel sized container, feel free to choose any variety we have; smaller containers will limit your choice to the smaller growing varieties.

Fall Color

Blueberries are noted for their striking fall foliage. Red hues from burgundy to flame, as well as bright yellow oranges, can add rich color to the fall landscape. Please note, colors will vary somewhat with location and climate.

We recommend the following products to keep your Blueberries healthy and happy.



Soil Amendment

Allows young roots to breathe and develop more easily when blended with our garden soils at planting time. Helps to retain moisture.



Starter Fertilizer

Provides the essential nutrients for excellent plant establishment. 'Sure Start' also adds beneficial mycorrhizae



Mulch

Keeps roots cool while reducing watering needs and suppressing weeds.



Soil Acidifier/Fertilizer Booster

Acidifies the soil which makes nutrients readily available for plant uptake.



Maintenance Fertilizer

Acidifies the soil while feeding; though typically not labeled for blueberries, a fertilizer designed for acid loving plants is preferred by these plants.

Southern High Bush Blueberries

Chill Hours	Fruit Flavor	Plant Size	Fall Color	Outstanding Feature
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Bountiful Blue 'FLX-2'   

≥150hrs	Full Robust Mid-Late	3-4 ft Rounded Habit	Wine, Orange, Yellow	Large Crops, Foliage Color
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'Bountiful Blue' has a prolific fruit set of large, super sweet berries and the bluest foliage on any Blueberry we have ever seen. Will set fruit alone, but the berries will be more prolific if it is planted near another blueberry; we recommend 'Sunshine Blue'. Nearly evergreen.

Emerald   

≥250hrs	Mild Sweet Mid	5-6 ft Rounded Spreading	Green	Huge Crops
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NEW! Emerald yields abundant crops of the largest Southern Highbush berries with a mild, sweet flavor. Its rounded, spreading bush habit makes it a great landscape plant. Dependable in southern climates with a low chill requirement of 250 hours.

Jewel   

≥200hrs	Tangy Early-Mid	6-8 ft Upright	Green	Great In The Landscape
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NEW! Jewel has become one of the leading varieties in California due to its adaptability, exceptional growth, high yields, and large, tangy fruit. Jewel is excellent for warmer regions due to its low chill requirement of 200 hours. Plant with other midseason varieties for best pollination.

Jubilee   

≥500hrs	Fresh Sweet Mid-Late	5-6 ft Upright	Wine, Yellow	Great for Eating Fresh
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Jubilee was developed in Mississippi where growing conditions can be tough. It has distinguished itself by performing well in heavier soils through summer heat and sudden winter cold. We especially like the taste of these easy picking, bountiful crops of sky blue berries that grow in large clusters.

Misty   

≥300hrs	Sweet, Spicy Early	4-6 ft Upright, Spreading	Blue-green, Burgundy	Great In The Landscape
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Misty is one of the most attractive, vigorous and high yielding Southern Highbush varieties. The bright blue-green foliage provides a perfect contrast to the pink and white spring flowers and sky blue summer fruit. Yields best when planted with other varieties.

Oneal   

≥600hrs	Juicy, Sweet Very Early	4-6 ft Upright, Spreading	Orange, Wine	Great Fresh Eating
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Oneal is considered by some to have the best flavor of all the Southern Highbush blueberries. Summer foliage is an attractive gray-green accented with red stems and branches. The correct soil pH is important and should be 4.5-5.5 for success with this variety.

Sharpblue   

≥200hrs	Delicate Sweet Early	5-6 ft Upright, Spreading	Green	Good In The Landscape
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Sharpblue is the leading and most adaptable variety in low chill areas throughout the world. Great for milder zones, it requires only 200 chilling hours. Sharpblue can bloom and fruit almost year round with foliage remaining nearly evergreen.

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Southmoon   

≥400hrs	Robust Fruity Mid-Late	5-6 ft Upright	Orange, Yellow	Great fresh Eating
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Southmoon is recommended if you are seeking an exceptional berry. It does best in lighter soils with generous additions of organic matter. This Florida native is performing well in California. We believe that it will become a favorite.

Star   

≥400hrs	Sweet Fruity Early	6-7 ft Upright	Yellow	Great In The Landscape
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NEW! Star has been a valuable contributor to the growth of the commercial blueberry industry in southern regions for good reason. From a strong, upright growing plant, large berries with pleasantly sweet flavor can now compliment early season bounty in home gardens.

Sunshine Blue   

≥150hrs	Rich Sweet Mid-Late	3 ft Compact Upright	Blue-Green, Burgundy	Great In A Container
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This semi-dwarf, versatile, evergreen blueberry features showy hot pink flowers that fade to white in spring; yield large crops of delicious berries. Sunshine Blue tolerates higher pH soils better than many other blueberries and is self-pollinating.

Northern High Bush Blueberries

Chill Hours	Fruit Flavor	Plant Size	Fall Color	Outstanding Feature
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Blue Crop   

≥800hrs	Classic Sweet Mid	5-6 ft Upright Open	Red	Huge Crops
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Bluecrop is considered the best all around variety for adaptability, long production period, high yield fruit, and disease resistance. There are other varieties with better ornamental value but few perform better in the garden. Bluecrop is perhaps the most widely planted variety in the U.S.

Blueray   

≥800hrs	Classic Fresh Mid	5-6 ft Upright Open	Red, Yellow	Tops for Eating
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An old favorite and versatile variety, Blueray performs particularly well in areas with hot summers or very cold winters and produces high quality berries with outstanding dessert flavor. The stunning rosy pink flowers turn bright white when in full bloom.

Earlblue   

≥800hrs	Light Blue, Sweet Very Early	4-6 ft Upright	Red, Burgundy	Great In The Landscape
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First to ripen, this upright bush produces stout canes with bright red wood while displaying large glossy green leaves in the summer and brilliant mixed red colors in the fall. Berries are light blue and large in size. Plant where blueberries are well suited and avoid frost pockets.

Jersey   

≥800hrs	Lush, Sweet Late	6-8 ft Upright	Orange, Flame	Great In Pies
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One of the oldest and most widely grown of all varieties; Jersey is a favorite for home gardeners who want an easy to grow bush. This variety tolerates a wide range of soil types, and the small to medium sized, sweet tasting fruit is a favorite for baking.

Patriot   

≥800hrs	Delicate Sweet Very Early	3-5 ft Spreading	Orange, Flame, and Yellow	Good for Containers
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Patriot is adaptable to many soil types and may perform better in wetter soils than many other varieties. Patriot makes an excellent container and landscape variety with its showy white blooms in the spring, dark green summer foliage, and fiery orange-red fall colors.

