

Blueberries

DID YOU KNOW
BLUEBERRIES
ARE ONE OF THE FEW
FRUITS THAT ARE
NATURALLY BLUE?

CAN I GROW BLUEBERRIES?

Blueberry plants are slow-growing bushes that thrive in acidic soil and full sun. Blueberries can be grown in zones 5-10 depending on which variety you choose. Low in calories, blueberries are a great source of fiber, vitamins C & K, and manganese. Blueberries are high in antioxidants, and just one handful contains 2 grams of nutrients, providing about 10 percent of the daily dose of vitamin C. They are heavy producers and fairly resistant to most pests and diseases.

HOW TO PLANT BLUEBERRIES

Blueberry plants should be planted about 6-10 feet apart in acidic soil. The best time to plant is in the fall or spring. To plant, dig a hole twice as wide and deep as needed. Mix a combination of 25% compost with 75% of your soil. Fill the bottom half of the hole around your plant with enough of your soil mix so that the surface of the root ball is flush with the ground. Backfill the hole with the rest of your soil mixture and water thoroughly. (If your soil is not naturally acidic, it is best to grow blueberry plants in large pots so that you can more easily control the pH with a soil acidifier.)



MAINTENANCE

After planting, keep the soil slightly moist but not wet until the plant becomes well established. During the first two years of growth, blueberry plants need approximately 1 to 2 inches of water per week. Your blueberries will only need to be lightly pruned to thin out the plants in order to encourage new growth toward the base of the plant. They should yield a crop about 2-3 years after planting. Keep in mind that blueberries will not ripen after being picked, so do not harvest your fruit until it is ready to be eaten.

COMMON PESTS AND DISEASES

As with any other plants, blueberry plants are susceptible to diseases and pests that you will need to be on the lookout for. It is important to check on your blueberries regularly to identify and treat any developing diseases or infections.

Blueberry Maggots

Blueberry maggots can occur when adult maggots lay their eggs in ripening blueberries. Within a week, the maggots will hatch and begin to feed on the berries. After eating the inside of the blueberries, the larva will drop to the ground and spend winter underground. After a year or two underneath the soil, the pupa will emerge from the soil as an adult ready to lay eggs and begin the process again. In defense against blueberry maggots, treat plants with an organic pesticide such as neem oil or pyrethrin.

Ripe Rot

Blueberry bushes are also vulnerable to ripe rot, a disease that originates from the fungus *Colletotrichum Gloeosporioide*. Evidence of ripe rot can be found in all areas of the plant such as leaves, fruit and branches. Berries infected with ripe rot shrivel and begin to decay on the branch. Infected branches and blossoms will begin to turn brown and grow small, white pores. You can protect your blueberry bushes by pruning off any infected areas with clean pruners and treating the ripe rot with an organic fungicide such as copper fungicide.

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