

# Starting Right with Blueberries

## SITE SELECTION AND PREPARATION

- Choose at least two varieties for pollination. Plant at least one plant per person; two to four plants if you plan on fresh eating and freezing or preserving berries.
- Choose as sunny a site as possible. At least 6 hours of sun a day are necessary for fruit quality.
- Well drained soil free of weeds and rich in organic matter is ideal. For most soils, work in well rotted sawdust or bark at planting so that the soil is 1/2 to 1/3 organic matter. Avoid mushroom compost as it is usually too high in pH.
- In very wet soils, consider building raised beds 3'-4' wide and 8"-12" high.
- Plant your blueberries where you can irrigate them during dry summer weather. Constant moisture is essential for success, especially for young plants.
- When planting, set the plant in the soil slightly high, mulch to the crown of the plants. The mulch should be 1"-2" thick.



## SPACING

- Compact Highbush and Highbush varieties should be spaced 4'-6' apart, with rows at least 8' apart. Blueberries depend on both wind and insect pollination, so should be planted within 20' for fruit set.
- Dwarf varieties can be spaced 1'-3' apart.
- Consider using blueberries in the landscape. The dwarf varieties Brunswick and Burgundy spread to form fruiting groundcovers 12" high and several feet wide. All the deciduous blueberries have good fall foliage colors and ornamental twigs.

## PRUNING AND CULTURAL CARE

- Remove all blossoms the first year. At planting, remove weak wood, and cut back strong stems by 1/3rd.
- Annually, in early spring, remove weak wood at the base, and older, twiggy wood by cutting to the ground. Brightly colored wood with long (3" or more) laterals bear the most fruit. Cutting older wood out promotes this kind of growth.
- Fertilize by using acid fertilizers (Rhododendron Food) or cottonseed meal. Apply once in early spring and again in late spring. Water in!
- Blueberries are not drought tolerant! Regular summer water is necessary for good production.
- Keep the plants weeded and mulched. Rake, turn, and replace the mulch each spring at pruning time. This helps prevent mummyberry disease.