

**Cultural Requirements:** Blueberries prefer an acid, well-drained soil. Their shallow, compact root systems makes regular irrigation a necessity. Mulching has proved beneficial in soils that are not ideal for blueberry growing. We recommend Northwest Best Top Dressing applied to a depth of 2 to 4 inches. This eliminates much of the need for cultivation and conserves moisture.

**Fertility:** With organic soils, the addition of phosphorus or potassium (or both) may be more important than the addition of nitrogen. Complete fertilizers , such as Dr. Earth Citrus & Fruit Tree Fertilizer, should be applied in early spring on the surface of the mulch in a broad ring around the plant.

**Planting Instructions:** Most blueberries ultimately reach a height of 6 feet or more with a 4 foot spread. Therefore, the rows should be at least eight feet apart with no two plants closer than 6 feet, unless a hedge is desired. The top of the root clump should be close to the surface if a mulch is used or about 4 inches deep without mulch.

**Fruit Production:** Two different varieties are recommended to insure fruit set. Any two varieties will cross-pollinate regardless of ripening time. The early varieties begin ripening in June and the late varieties in early August. When planting two or three year old plants, the blossoms can be removed for a year or two to promote vegetative growth. Blueberries tend to over-bear rather than under-bear. Thinning of the blossoms will promote larger fruit and a healthier bush.

**Pruning:** After the plant has established itself, old tired wood that is loaded with too many fruit buds and too few leaf buds may be removed. Some of the thrifty vegetative wood may be removed to prevent the plant from becoming too sprawling or too high. Blueberries become sweeter as they hang on the bush. The only reason to pick early (as they turn blue) is to escape predatory birds. Home gardeners often protect their plants from birds with netting. A large plant may have 15 to 20 pounds of fruit and is worth protecting.