

Successful blueberries

WINTER CHILL:

There are 2 distinct varieties, Northern Highbush (NH) and Southern Highbush (SH). NH berries tend to be deciduous and require colder winter climates. Bluecrop is the most widely planted in both home gardens and on farms. SH tend to be semi-evergreen and require fewer chill hours. SH berries are the predominant choice in mild San Francisco although many NH varieties will still set fruit.

POLLINATION:

While most blueberries are self-fruitful, they will produce larger fruit and more abundantly if 2 cultivars in the same flowering period are planted together. NH should be planted with NH and SH with SH. The same effect is not seen in SH:NH pairings.

Early flowering SH varieties will ripen fruit in May/June:

Misty, O'Neal, Sharpblue

Mid flowering SH varieties will ripen with fruit in June:

Jubilee, Southmoon, Sunshine Blue, Emerald

Early flowering NH varieties will ripen with fruit in June/July:

Bluejay, Earliblue, Patriot, Reka

Mid flowering NH varieties ripen fruit in July:

Bluecrop, Bluejay, Blueray, Hardyblue, Draper, Chandler, Berkeley

Late flowering NH varieties ripen fruit in July/August:

Chandler, Elliott, Jersey, Legacy

ACIDITY:

Blueberries require an acid soil and a regular feeding plan. Amend soil or use alone in containers, EB Stone Azalea/Camellia Mix. Supplement with F.S.T. (an acidifying agent containing the nutrients iron, sulfur, manganese, and zinc) in early spring and again in late summer. Feed plants monthly once they have leafed out with Maxsea Acid formula or EB Stone Azalea/Camellia Food.

WATER:

Regular/average irrigation is needed, especially when the plants are setting berries. Use mulch to keep the shallow roots cool, prevent weed competition, and reduce soil evaporation.

EXPOSURE:

Blueberries want full to part sun.

SPACING:

In the ground, space plants 3' apart if creating a hedge, allow 4' to 5' for free-standing shrubs. Planters should be a minimum of 18" for individual plants. A wine barrel will accommodate 2 or 3 plants comfortably.



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