

Wabash Antiques & Feed Store

5701 Washington Avenue

Houston, Texas 77001

Phone: 713-863-8322

Tips on Growing Blueberries in Southeast Texas

By Dianne Norman

Arcadia Nursery & Farm

I believe more gardeners would grow blueberries once they knew the varieties and understood type of care they need. There is nothing more satisfying than to pick your own blueberries fresh knowing you grew them yourself. If you grow them organically you can feel comfortable eating them fresh from your garden. Blueberries are higher in anti-oxidants than any other fruit. Blueberries are relatively pest free and fairly easy to grow with some care. When you decide to grow blueberries you can not plant them and then forget them. Some attention to soil, irrigation and fertilization is suggested for a successful blueberry garden. More than one variety should be planted for increased production. 5 to 6' apart set in a circle is suggested for pollination.

VARIETIES: Rabiteye Blueberries - Zones 6-9

Variety	Season	Fruit Size	Flavor	Color	Height
Climax.....	Early.....	Med. size	Sweet	Lt. Blue	upright 6-10 feet
Briteblue.....	Late.....	Large	very sweet.....	Lt. Blue.....	Medium growing
Tifblue	Mid.....	Large	good quality.....	Lt. Blue.....	upright 8-14 feet
Brightwell.....	Mid.....	Med. to Large	Sweet flavor	Lt. Blue	upright 8-12 feet
Becky blue.....	Early.....	Med. to Large	Sweet	Lt. Blue.....	upright spreading 6-10 feet
Premier.....	Early-Mid.....	Large	Excellent flavor	Lt. Blue.....	upright 6-10 feet
Woodard	Early	Large	Slightly tart.....	Lt. Blue.....	Med. growing bush
Delite.....	Mid to late.....	Med. to Large.....	Sweet-kool aid flavor.....	Pinkish-blue.....	upright 8 to 12 feet

Soil Type: Blueberries need an acid soil Ph. between 4.5 and 5.5 to perform well. Houston soil has a lot of clay and needs plenty of organic matter added. By adding pure sphagnum peat moss you can lower the pH. to the desired range , use a Ph. meter to monitor every 2 years. Blueberries have a very shallow root system and should be planted in a raised bed of Sphagnum peat moss 8" to 12" high. Blueberries can be grown successfully in large containers.

Fertilization: Blueberries do not do well with synthetic fertilizers. Add and mix in to the peat moss bed 1/4 lb. agricultural sulphur per 3 x 3 ft. sq. twice a year. Mulch the blueberries with pine straw or native Mulch from (Natures Way) about 6" deep. Coffee grounds and cottonseed meal can be added. Microlife is a good balanced fertilizer can also be used. Be sure to check the pH. of the soil within 2 years of planting.

Irrigation: I have found drip irrigation works the best since it is very important that the (beds) never dry out. July and August can be very dry and peat moss will dry out drastically if not kept moist with drip irrigation. A timer can be used if you like but be sure to take into consideration our monsoon months where it rains 10" to 12" at a time. This is also why you want the beds to be raised so the blueberries are not sitting in a pool of water for any length of time. They need good drainage, moist, organic material and never dry with a pH. between 4.5 and 5.5.

For more reading on Blueberries "Year Round Vegetables, Fruits and Flowers for Metro Houston" by Bob Randall Ph.D.