

BLUEBERRIES

HIGHBUSH BLUEBERRIES

In The Home Garden

Horticultural Branch, B.C. Ministry of Agriculture

Blueberries are a welcome addition to most gardens. Since highbush blueberry plants have ornamental value, they may be planted in many areas around the home.

LOCATION AND SOILS Highbush blueberry bushes should be planted where they receive sun for most of the day. They require acid soils (pH 4.5 - 5.5) with good organic matter content. They will not tolerate flooding during the growing season, but must have an adequate supply of moisture. Where soils are heavy or subject to drying a 10-20 cm mulch of sawdust or similar material is beneficial.

SPACING As a general rule, bushes should be planted 1.5 m apart with 2 m. between rows. Planting distances depend, to some degree, upon growth habits of individual varieties.

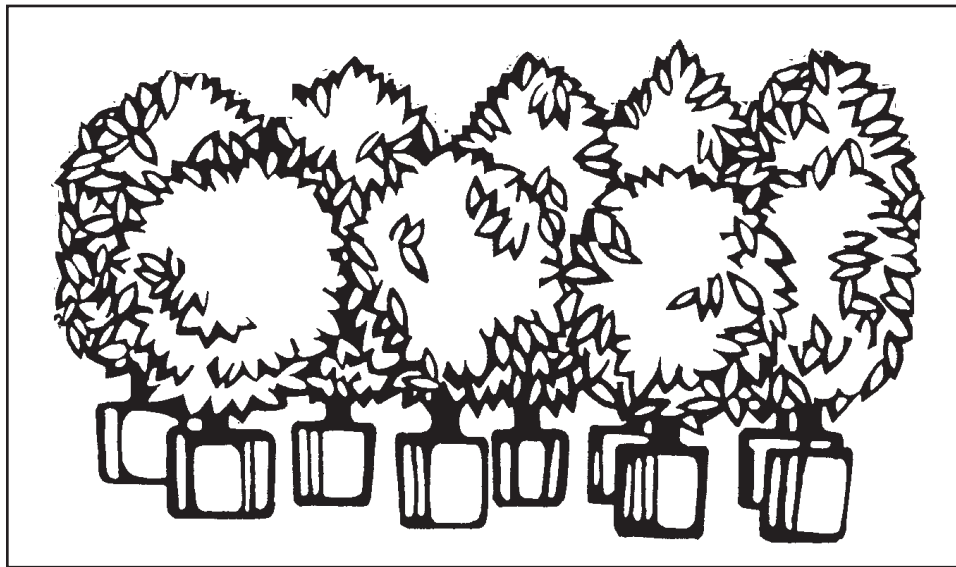
PLANTING Plants are best purchased as 2 to 3 year olds. Plants may be propagated from hardwood cuttings taken in spring before growth starts. Softwood cuttings may be taken during summer and rooted under mist.

It is best to plant in early spring before growth starts. Damaged roots and about 1/3 of the top growth should be removed before planting. Remove all blossom clusters for the first two seasons after planting. When mature plants are purchased, remove all top growth before planting.

FERTILIZER Fertilizers should not be placed in the crown of the plant. Band fertilizer around the plant from the drip line to no closer than 20 cm. from the outer canes. Use 150-300 g. of 6-8-6 per plant for plants up to 5 years of age. Older plants may require up to 1000 g. depending on vigor. One to two tablespoons of epsom salts should be applied yearly to supply magnesium.

POLLINATION Although most varieties of blueberries are self fruitful, at least to some degree, a planting of 2 or more varieties is recommended to ensure optimum fruit set.

CULTIVATION Blueberry plants do not compete well with weeds, therefore shallow cultivation is required during the growing season. Deep cultivation should be avoided because plants are shallow-rooted.



PRUNING Plants less than 5 years old require little pruning other than to remove weak growth and shape the bush. From the sixth year on, 1-2 of the oldest canes

should be removed each year. These should be cut off at ground level. Thin out the bush to admit light and permit air circulation, and remove weak wood. Summer pinching of new growth may be practiced to produce compact plants.

HARVEST Highbush blueberry plants will produce little crop in the first four years. From the fifth year on about 2-5 kg per bush may be expected. The harvest season extends from mid-July for early varieties to September for late varieties. The cropping period for any one variety is about six weeks.

VARIETIES

Early

Earliblue: relatively hardy, large firm fruit, upright bush.

Northland: hardy, medium sized, firm, good flavoured fruit, spreading bush.

Northsky: Similar to Northland

Midseason

Bluecrop: fairly hardy, large, tart, firm fruit, good yields.

Blueray: fairly hardy, spreading bush. Very large, firm sweet fruit.

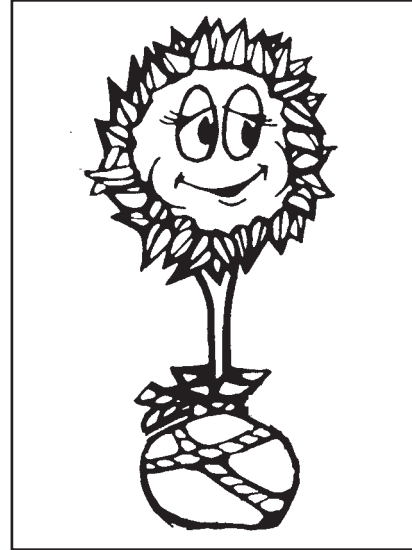
Berkeley: fairly hardy, spreading bush, medium hardy. Large firm fruit.

Late

Jersey: vigorous spreading bush, large fruited.

Rubel: upright bush, firm small fruit.

INSECT AND DISEASE For control of insects and diseases of highbush blueberries, consult the B.C. Ministry of Agriculture publication "Pest Control for the Home Gardener."



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