

Blueberry Care Guide for BC

HOW TO PLANT, GROW & HARVEST

BLUEBERRIES

Blueberries (*Vaccinium* species) are one of the easiest and most rewarding edible shrubs for British Columbia gardens. These attractive plants produce delicious berries while also offering beautiful spring flowers and vibrant fall foliage.

Blueberries thrive in acidic soil with consistent moisture and perform exceptionally well in many parts of British Columbia.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT BLUEBERRY TYPE

Blueberries are grouped by their harvest season and plant size.

Early Season Blueberries

- Fruit ripens early in summer
- Often the first berries ready to harvest

Examples include:

- 'Duke'
- 'Patriot'

Mid-Season Blueberries

- Fruit ripens mid-summer
- Reliable yields and excellent flavour

Examples include:

- 'Bluecrop'
- 'Toro'

Late Season Blueberries

- Extend the harvest season into late summer

Examples include:

- 'Elliott'
- 'Aurora'

Planting a mix of early, mid, and late varieties helps ensure a continuous harvest throughout the summer.

POLLINATION & FRUIT PRODUCTION

Blueberries are self-fertile but produce larger crops and better fruit set when multiple varieties are planted nearby.

Benefits of planting more than one variety:

- Improved pollination
- Larger berry size
- Higher yields
- Extended harvest season

Bees are important pollinators for blueberries and help improve fruit production.

HOW TO PLANT BLUEBERRIES

Blueberries have very specific soil needs, and proper preparation is key to success.

Sun Requirements

- Full sun is ideal
- Minimum 6 hours of sunlight daily
- Some afternoon shade may help protect plants in hotter inland gardens

Soil Requirements

Blueberries require strongly acidic soil.

Ideal conditions:

- Soil pH between 4.5–5.5
- Rich organic matter
- Excellent drainage

Amend soil with:

- Compost – we recommend Sea Soil, Gardenworks Composted Mushroom Manure, or Gardenworks Composted Cattle Manure
- Bark mulch
- Acidic soil amendments such as soil acidifier if necessary

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PLANTING STEPS

1. Dig a hole twice as wide as the root ball.
2. Amend soil with compost and organic matter.
3. Plant at the same depth as the plant growing in its container.
4. Water thoroughly with Gardenworks Transplanting Fertilizer 5-15-5 to encourage root development.
5. Apply 2–3 inches (5-7cm) of mulch (bark mulch works well).

Mulch helps maintain soil acidity and retain soil moisture.

WATERING BLUEBERRIES

Blueberries require consistent moisture.

- Water regularly during the growing season
- Avoid allowing soil to dry completely
- Deep watering during hot, dry summer periods helps maintain fruit quality

Mulch helps reduce moisture loss and protects the plant's shallow root system.

FERTILIZING BLUEBERRIES

Blueberries are light feeders but benefit from proper nutrition.

- Fertilize with Gardenworks Fruit Tree & Berry Food 4-20-20
- Apply in early spring
- Avoid heavy fertilization

Compost top-dressing in spring or fall also improves soil health.

PRUNING BLUEBERRIES

Pruning helps maintain productivity and plant health.

- Begin pruning after plants are 2–3 years old
- Remove dead or weak branches
- Thin older wood to encourage new growth
- Maintain open structure for good sunlight penetration and airflow.

Prune during late winter while plants are dormant.

GROWING BLUEBERRIES IN SOUTH COASTAL BC

Blueberries grow exceptionally well in coastal BC.

Climate Advantages

- Mild winters
- Moderate summer temperatures
- Naturally acidic soils in most areas

These conditions closely match the plant's natural growing environment.

Inland Care Adjustments

- Amend soil heavily to increase acidity with soil acidifier fertilizer
- Use raised beds if soil pH is high
- Provide consistent irrigation
- Mulch heavily to protect the plant's shallow roots

Careful soil preparation and ongoing soil management is the key to success inland.

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COMMON BLUEBERRY PROBLEMS & SOLUTIONS

Yellow Leaves

Possible causes:

- Soil too alkaline
- Poor drainage
- Nutrient deficiency

Solutions:

- Maintain acidic soil conditions
- Apply fertilizer designed for acid-loving plants
- Improve soil with organic matter

Small or Few Berries

Possible causes:

- Lack of pollination
- Insufficient sunlight
- Poor pruning

Solutions:

- Plant multiple varieties
- Ensure full sun exposure
- Prune regularly to encourage new fruiting wood

Birds Eating Fruit

Birds are one of the most common blueberry pests.

Solutions:

- Use bird netting during fruit ripening
- Harvest berries regularly as they ripen

Poor Plant Growth

Possible causes:

- Incorrect soil pH
- Compacted soil
- Lack of organic matter

Solutions:

- Test soil pH
- Improve soil with compost and mulch to increase organic matter

SEASONAL BLUEBERRY CARE CALENDAR

Early Spring

- Apply fertilizer for acid-loving plants
- Inspect for winter damage

Late Spring

- Enjoy flowering
- Ensure good pollination

Summer

- Harvest berries
- Water consistently

Fall

- Enjoy fall foliage colour
- Maintain mulch layer

Winter

- Prune plants during dormancy

BLUEBERRY FAQs

Do blueberries grow well in BC?

Yes. Coastal BC provides excellent conditions for blueberry production.

Can blueberries grow in Penticton?

Yes, but soil acidity must be carefully managed.

Do blueberries need acidic soil?

Yes. Blueberries require acidic soil to absorb nutrients properly and grow well

How long do blueberry plants live?

Well-maintained plants can produce fruit for 20–30 years or longer.