

Growing Blueberries

Blueberries are well-adapted to north Idaho. However, special care is needed to assure healthy plants and good berry production. Soil needs to be acid, to a pH of around 4.5. Our soils have a pH between 5.5 and 7.0, so acidifiers need to be added to correct the pH before planting and periodically to maintain pH near 4.5. Blueberries like a lot of nitrogen, and using acidifying fertilizers such as ammonium sulfate or Miracid are ideal. Consider mulching with pine needles and other acidifying forms of organic matter. Moose Valley currently carries the following varieties:

Early Season

Earliblue - Medium to large, firm, light blue berries. Small picking scar; crack resistant. Excellent, mild sweet full flavor. Pollinate with Bluecrop. Avoid poorly drained soils. Earliest ripening blueberry. Best in northern areas.

Duke - considered the best early season cultivar available. It has late bloom that avoids many frosts and still produces an early crop. The fruit size and quality is very good but the flavor can be bland if picked late. It can be machine harvested. Frost tolerance and winter hardiness is good. Winter hardy to -25°C.

Spartan - Fruit is firm and very large with very good flavor. A late bloom date avoids many frosts, but it still produces a large, early crop. It does best on ideal sites but performs poorly in soils that have to be highly amended for blueberries. It harvests well mechanically and has some resistance to mummy berry. It requires cross pollination for best yields. Winter hardy to -25°C.

Mid Season

Bluecrop - the most widely planted mid-season cultivar in the world. It produces high yields of medium sized, firm fruit with good flavor. It is hardy in all but the coldest sites and can be machine harvested. The canes tend to be weepy so care should be taken to maintain the shape. It has very good disease resistance. Winter hardy to -25°C

North Country – Short in stature, plant maturing at 20" high. Fruits are small and flavorful, good for home gardener use. This cultivar is an outstanding ornamental with profuse flowering and brilliant fall colors. Grown successfully in zones 3-8. A half-high blueberry.

Patriot - winter hardy but frost sensitive due to early bloom. The fruit is large and firm with a small blossom scar. Full ripeness is needed for good flavor and sweetness. The bush is small to medium and grows slowly but is still productive. It must be pruned hard for large fruit and be fully ripe for best flavor. More tolerant to heavier soils than most varieties. Winter hardy to -25°C

Late Season

Jersey - old (1928) cultivar that is adapted to a wide soil range. It has high yields of machine harvested fruit but the berries are small and soft. The bush has an upright habit and forms a dense center that should be pruned to promote air movement. Winter hardy to -35°C.

Late Season

Liberty - produces fruit approximately 5 days before Elliot with better flavor. The plants are vigorous and upright with good hardiness. The fruit has very good storage capacity.

Late Season (cont'd)

Pink Lemonade - A true rabbiteye blueberry, Pink Lemonade has bright pink berries that ripen late in the season (late July into August) on compact plants that grow to a height of no more than 5 feet. Its size can be easily controlled by the homeowner, which is a definite plus for use in the landscape. It is said to have a light, fruity flavor that is sweet and tasty.

Low Bush Blueberries

Top Hat – A beautiful 24-inch in stature, fruit producing blueberry plant. Its curving branches make it an outstanding landscape or pot plant. Fruits are medium size and are delicious. The plant makes a desirable addition to any landscape. Grown successfully in zones 5-8.

For more information, call Moose Valley Farms, 267-5108.