

HARVEST

Now we come to the best part!

Plants produced at Moondarra Blueberries are grown from cuttings so are able to fruit in the first summer. However, as advised in the pruning section, it is best to let the plant get established before letting it fruit by removing the flowers either by pruning, or rubbing them off with your fingers, when they appear in spring. This is usually only needed for the initial couple of years after you plant it out.

Once you feel the plant is showing signs of vigour, you can allow the plant to set it's first crop of berries. The average mature blueberry bush (5 or 6 years of age) should produce 5kg or more of berries each season, though this does depend on variety. The fruit grows in clusters of berries which do not ripen evenly. The fruit in any single bunch will ripen progressively, over a period of 5 or 6 weeks.

The berries turn blue before they are ripe and then start to gain flavour and increase in size. The most common problem with harvesting is deciding just when they are ready for their first pick.

The fruit will hang on the bush for some time, so don't be afraid to let them mature. At every pick select the largest berries in each cluster. In a weeks time do the same again. In this way, you will realise the full potential of your bushes and be delighted with the results.

You will find that birds and possums are more than willing to help with the harvest, so a form of bird protection may be necessary. A piece of bird netting draped over the bush and weighted down with bricks, or pegged, should be adequate.

We hope you enjoy your blueberry experience!



FARMERS' MARKETS

We have a market stall at the following farmers' markets where you can buy fruit and plants.

Opening times for markets is 8am to 1pm.

- 1st Saturday of every month -

Veg Out St Kilda Farmers' Market
Peanut Farm Oval, Chaucer Street

Kingston Farmers' Market

Sir William Fry Reserve, Nepean Hwy, Highett

- 2nd Saturday of every month -

Collingwood Farmers' Market
Collingwood Children's Farm, St Heliers St, Abbotsford

- 3rd Saturday of every month -

Boroondara Farmers' Market
Patterson Reserve, Auburn Road, Hawthorn East

Gasworks Farmers' Market

Gasworks Arts Park, Port Melbourne

- 4th Saturday of every month -

Convent Slow Food
Abbotsford Convent, St Heliers St, Abbotsford

Product Range Availability Estimate

Fresh Blueberries – Dec/Jan to April

Frozen Blueberries – March to December

Blueberry Plants – April to December



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Please be good to the environment and pass this on to a friend or place into your compost once you've finished with it.



BLUEBERRIES GUIDE TO GROWING



BUY BLUEBERRY PLANTS ONLINE!

Our online nursery makes it easy to buy blueberry plants for your backyard.

www.moonblue.com.au

INTRODUCTION

Blueberries are a long lived, extremely attractive bush with no thorns which make them an excellent addition to any farm or garden. They are an attractive plant that has delicate, bell shaped, white/pinkish flowers in spring, large clusters of light to dark blue tasty berries in summer, and with some varieties, brilliant foliage colours in autumn.

They are a free standing bush, requiring no staking. Depending on variety, they grow anywhere from 1 to 2.4 metres (3' to 8') high in six or seven years. If maintained and pruned, the plants can live sixty or more years.

The flowers emit a soft aroma to attract bees, which are essential for pollination and ensures good fruit set.

Blueberry fruit develops from these flowers into clusters, on wood of the previous season's growth – each berry slowly turning from green to pink and finally blue.

There are many different varieties of blueberries which fruit at different times of the year. They vary in size, texture and flavour. These varieties come in two general types – evergreen or deciduous.

- The **evergreen** varieties won't lose their leaves in autumn, though they will go a subtle yellow or red colour.
- The **deciduous** varieties have foliage that is normally dark green and this will transform to a brilliant orange, scarlet and red before losing their leaves ready for dormancy in winter.

GROWING CONDITIONS

Blueberries are related to Azaleas, Rhododendrons and Camellias and require similar growing conditions.

To facilitate fruit ripening they require half a day to a full day of sun. Protection from strong winds is advisable.

Growing smaller varieties in pots is possible. Once the plant is about 6 years old (at maturity), it should already be potted into a half wine barrel size pot (indicative size only).

SOIL REQUIREMENTS

Plants prefer a free draining, acid soil (pH 4.5 to 5.5) with a high organic matter content – avoid the use of lime.

Shallow or poor draining soils can be improved by the addition of organic matter and, if planting in the ground, creating a raised bed to assist with drainage.

An Azalea, or good quality potting mix without wetting agent, is best if planting in a pot.

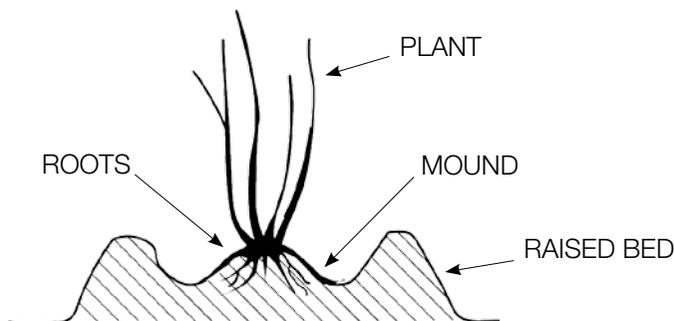
PLANTING

To allow full size development of the plant, a spacing between plants of around 1.4 metres (4'6") is desired but if you are pushed for space, they will still do quite well down to 1.0 metre or less.

Half a bucket of peat moss (available from you local nursery) mixed with the soil in the planting hole will greatly assist plant establishment. They love the acid nature of peat and the moisture it can hold.

Dig the hole with a mound in the centre. Remove the plant from the pot and tease the roots out thoroughly. Place the plant on the mound in the centre of the hole and arrange the plant roots to radiate out from the crown in a natural fashion. It is important the roots are not knotted or curled around the crown.

Backfill with the soil/peat mixture and firm around the plant, then water in well. Watering in will settle the soil around the roots, which is essential for a healthy plant. Liquid kelp or seaweed added to the water will help overcome any transplant shock.



MULCH

Mulch is the best management practice you can employ for blueberries because the plants thrive on organic matter and the soil micro-organisms it supports.

Suitable mulch would be:

- sawdust
- pinebark
- pine needles.
- oak leaves
- straw
- woodchip

Mulching helps to control weeds and retain soil moisture. As the mulch breaks down over time it adds organic matter to the soil which helps maintain the acid soil conditions that blueberries require.

WATER & FERTILISER

Blueberries are a shallow rooted plant and don't like to dry out. During the growing season in spring, and especially while they are fruiting, a good soak, several times a week, is needed. Check occasionally under the mulch that you are not watering too much or too little.

Blueberries are sensitive to excess fertiliser. Compost or animal manure (don't use chook manure) added to the mulch several times throughout the growing season would be beneficial. Seaweed and fish emulsion may also be used. As an alternative, a slow release Azalea plant food could also be applied.

Remember when fertilising, a little fertiliser often is better than one or two big doses.

PRUNING

The first one or two years of owning your plant:

The main pruning required in the first two years will be the removal of any weak spindly growth in winter, and the removal of flowers in spring. We advise removing the flowers in the first one or two years to allow the plant to establish itself before putting it's energy into producing fruit.

After two years:

Prune the plant every winter, keeping only the strong, vigorous canes and laterals, especially the ones shooting from the base of the plant. Open out the centre of the plant, and remove any weak twiggy growth. The plant will respond to a hard cut back and produce bigger, juicier berries and new vegetative growth, and therefore a bigger potential crop in the following season.

It is a good idea to sterilise your secateurs before starting to prune. This can be done by dipping them in methylated spirits or boiling water.



BEFORE PRUNING

AFTER PRUNING