





Blueberry (*Vaccinium* spp.)

Type	Deciduous/ Evergreen	Height x Width (metres)	Spacing (metres)	Pollinator	Soil type	Sun	Moisture	Shelter	Plant	Harvest
	D/E	3 x 2	1.5–2	Y				Y	Autumn to winter	Midsummer

Site

- Prefers sun, with afternoon shade in summer. Needs winter chilling, and shelter from wind and spring frosts. Doesn't do well in the eastern parts of the region.
- Needs well-drained, acidic soil that can hold moisture during the summer – plant on a ridge if there's any chance of waterlogging. Does not like clay – add gypsum, organic matter and sand.
- Fruit forms on 1-year-old wood.
- Cut out dead or diseased wood, and weak or criss-crossing branches.
- Remove wood that is 4 years old, to encourage the growth of new shoots from the base of the plant.
- Once mature, prune again in summer, shortening any long shoots so new fruit buds grow near the centre of the plant.

Care

- A very fussy plant.
- Plant in winter in a hole 30cm deep and wide, with leaf mould added to the soil; add flowers of sulphur to make the soil more acidic, or use a container (45cm diam.) of acidic potting soil.
- Very shallow rooting. Needs moisture at all times during the growing season, but doesn't tolerate waterlogging.
- Spread a 10cm deep mulch of sawdust, leaf mould or pine needles to keep the roots cool and moist, and to supply nutrients. Add 5cm more mulch every year, and some extra nitrogen in spring and midsummer.
- Pinch off the flowers in the first year so the plant can get established.
- Protect from birds.
- Pollinated by bumble bees. Will produce bigger fruit if cross-pollinated with another variety.

Training & pruning

- Plant 1m apart to form a hedge, or include in mixed plantings.
- Prune in winter.

Harvest

- Takes 2–4 years to bear fruit.
- Best flavour is a few days after the berries have turned blue. Pick by rolling them gently between the thumb and finger.
- Eat fresh, freeze (they naturally free-flow), add to smoothies, yoghurt, desserts and baking, bottle, or make jam or chutney.
- Dry them to use instead of raisins.

Health

- High in vitamins A, B, C, E and minerals, very high in antioxidants, and have anti-inflammatory properties.

Recommended varieties

Rabbit eye: Tifsblue, Powder Blue, Delite
Highbush: Duke, Dixie, Bluecrop

Plants for free

Multiply your plants by *layering*:

- In early autumn, choose a long, healthy young stem and peg it down in the soil.
- Keep it moist until it develops roots (up to 18 months), then cut the new plant free and keep it in a pot in a sheltered place until planting time.