



Blueberries are a delight for your palate and garden, offering antioxidant-rich fruit and stunning seasonal foliage. These productive shrubs are easy to care for and thrive in garden beds and large containers. With the right soil, regular watering, and a little maintenance, blueberries will reward you with bountiful harvests and year-round interest.



Why Grow Blueberries?

Not only do blueberries produce delicious fruit, but they also make attractive garden plants with their compact shape and striking red and orange autumn foliage. They're a great choice for edible landscapes and can be grown as low hedges or statement specimens in containers. Nutritionally, blueberries are low in calories and high in fibre, vitamins, and antioxidants, making them a powerhouse addition to your diet.

Blueberries are also ideal for gardeners looking for a lower-maintenance crop. Once established, they require less attention than many other fruiting plants and are relatively pest—and disease-resistant.

Ideal Growing Conditions

Blueberries prefer full sun, meaning at least six hours of direct sunlight daily. In hotter areas, a position with morning sun and some afternoon shade is ideal. They thrive in well-draining, acidic soil and need consistent moisture, particularly in the growing and fruiting seasons. Shelter from strong winds will also help improve growth and berry quality.

Soil Preparation

Garden:

The key to success with blueberries is in the soil. They prefer acidic conditions, with a pH between 4.5 and 5.5. If you're unsure about your soil pH, test kits are available. Improve soil with compost, peat, and other organic matter. Avoid adding lime or mushroom compost, which raises the pH. Incorporate products like Oderings Peat or Tui Sheep Pellets to increase organic content and moisture retention.



Pots:

Use a large container at least 40cm wide and deep. Choose an acid-based potting mix with added peat and avoid standard composts or those containing lime. A quality container mix like Oderings Shrub & Tub, blended with peat, works well. Repot every 2–3 years.



Feeding

Garden:

In early spring, apply Yates Thrive Camellia, Gardenia & Blueberry Fertiliser, suited to acid-loving plants. Reapply in midsummer to support flower and fruit development. Avoid overfeeding, especially with high-nitrogen fertilisers, which promote excessive leafy growth at the expense of fruit.



Pots:

Use a liquid fertiliser like Yates Thrive Strawberry & Berry Fruit every 2–3 weeks during the growing season. This helps maintain vigour and supports consistent cropping. Total Replenish slow-release granules can also be mixed into the soil at planting and refreshed annually.



Watering & Mulching

Blueberries need consistent moisture, especially from flowering until harvest. Water when the top of the soil begins to dry out, but avoid waterlogging. Check soil moisture regularly in containers, as pots dry faster than garden beds.

Apply 5–7cm thick mulch to keep roots cool, suppress weeds, and maintain consistent moisture. Use pine bark, pine needles, or composted sawdust. To prevent rot, avoid burying the crown of the plant under mulch.

Protection from Pests & Frost

Birds are the most common threat to your crop. As berries begin to colour, use bird netting or a pop-up fruit cage. Blueberries are generally hardy to -4°C , but if frost threatens during flowering, cover plants with frost cloth to protect blooms. In very cold areas, container-grown plants can be shifted to sheltered spots during frost events.

Pruning

Blueberries benefit from light annual pruning. Remove dead, damaged, or twiggy wood and any weak stems in winter. This encourages better airflow and light penetration.

After 3–4 years, remove a few of the oldest, thickest canes at ground level each winter to make way for new shoots. Fruit is produced on one-year-old wood, so maintaining a renewal cycle leads to better harvests.





Blueberries

Harvesting

Blueberries ripen gradually over several weeks. Berries are ready to pick when they turn fully blue and come off easily in your hand. Don't rush—berries that look ripe may still need a few days to sweeten fully.

Regular picking encourages fruit ripening and helps avoid attracting birds or pests. Under good conditions, a mature bush can produce 2–4kg of fruit per season.

Understanding Blueberry Varieties

- Northern Highbush: Best for cooler regions with high winter chilling. Excellent flavour and yields.
- Southern Highbush: Suited to warmer climates. Lower chilling needs and earlier harvests.
- Rabbit-eye: Very heat-tolerant and productive. Needs a long growing season and cross-pollination.

For the best results, plant at least two different varieties that flower at the same time to improve pollination and fruit size. Different varieties also spread your harvest over a longer period.



For juicy, luscious berries and healthy green foliage try **Yates Thrive Strawberry & Berry Fruit liquid plant food.**

Fast, dual-action formula feeds through roots and leaves.

Super concentrated formula makes up to 17 x 9L watering cans of fertiliser!

For set & forget 3-month feeding of plants that need acidic soil to thrive, try **Yates Thrive Camellia, Gardenia & Blueberry granular plant food.**

Feeds blueberries, gardenias, camellias, daphnes & magnolias.

Suitable for both pots and garden beds.



For more advice on growing berries talk to Yates on 0800 693 297, or via Live Chat on yates.co.nz



Garden Expert Tip

Remove any flowers in the first season after planting to allow your blueberry plant to focus on establishing a strong root system. This sets the stage for better yields in future years. If growing in containers, slightly elevate pots off the ground to improve drainage and airflow.

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