

GROWING BLUEBERRIES | USE THIS CLEVER METHOD TO GET A NEVER-ENDING SUPPLY...



Blueberries are popular little guys, and for good reason! They are a superfood BOMB when it comes to health benefits. These tiny berries are filled with iron, calcium, zinc, magnesium, manganese, vitamin K, vitamin C, and vitamin E. They are one of the most effective natural resource of antioxidants, they containing anti-inflammatory abilities, and they are great for maintaining mental cognition.

Right now you might be thinking: "Well, yes, I'm aware of all that, but they are just so darn expensive!" And unfortunately you're right. It's like supermarkets want you to be paying extra because they are so good for you. There is simple a way to skip the price tag and supermarkets ques and get straight to the nitty-gritty and that is to grow your own.

This year 2018, blueberries will be celebrating their 100th Year of being commercially grown for consumption, and there are multiple reasons to celebrate. From lowering blood pressure to protecting from DNA damage, new research has shown this little berry to have a dramatically positive impact on our health.

Don't let the price of blueberries keep you from their powerful benefits! Use these simple tips to start your own blueberry garden, and you may even end up with more blueberries than you could ever ask for!

Maybe you have little gardening experience, or feel that no matter how hard you've tried you just don't have a green thumb. Not to worry! Here are some fool-proof tips that will be sure to give you all the blueberries your heart desires!



1. Find the right kind of bush

The first step to growing your own blueberry garden is to do a little research. Some blueberry bushes do better in humid climates while others can withstand very cold temperatures. Generally the varieties found in Western Cape Garden Centres are those listed below but research first to find just what kind of blueberry will best suit the climate where you live:

- O'Neal – Shrub grows 1,5m Height, Tasty fresh Summer berries, Heavy bearer, Self fertile, Shelter from the wind, Cut back quarter to two thirds of the older canes once bearing is complete
- Centurion – Shrub grows 1,5m Height, Dark blue late Summer Berries, Crisp Aromatic flavour, Shelter from the wind, Cut back quarter to two thirds of the older canes once bearing is complete
- Sharp Blue – Shrub grows 1,5m Height. Dark blue Summer berries have a robust flavour. Self fertile.
- Misty – Shrub grows 1,5m Height. Pink-white Spring flowers, followed by sky blue, sweet Summer fruit. Self fertile.



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2. Don't skimp on the correct soil medium and fertiliser

One mistake lots of gardeners make is not finding the right kind of soil medium. Don't just find a random patch of the garden and assume that it's good. Not all soil is created equal. Check the pH level of your soil. Generally, between a 4 and 5 is ideal which is more acidic than our traditional Western Cape soils by quite a tall order.

As your available garden soil is most likely not the best for ensuring high yields you would be better off following the guidelines of the commercial growers by purchasing soil and planting your berries in pots. We have PH tested all our potting soils and all are PH neutral to marginally acidic which would mean to ensure the correct PH you would have to add Acidic Peat Moss to your mixture at the rate of 2 parts Potting Soil to 1 part Acidic Peat followed up annually by a soil application of "Acid Loving Plant Food" @ approx. 40g around each plant and water in. Should plants have not been planted with Acidic Peat the apply a 2nd application of "Acid Loving Plant Food" 40g around each plant 5 to 6 weeks after first application and water in well for best results.

Starke Ayres recommends feeding blueberries with Talborne 6.3.4 as a June / July application and thereafter a Hydroponic fertilizer product called Nutrifeed at the rate of 10g per 5 liter of water applied every 2 weeks. This water soluble fertiliser has an excellent Nitrogen Level of 65g/kg but more importantly a higher Potassium concentration of 130g/kg which is absolutely essential in the formation of flowers which once pollinated resonate in the most desirable berries we enjoy eating.

3. Plant them the right way

Blueberries need lots of sunlight. If you're planting your berries in the ground, make sure that the area you choose gets a lot of sunlight during the day. Also make sure to leave at least 1,5 meters between each bush. If you are planting in pots, choose a pot that's 45cm in diameter (We sell special Blueberry pots), and again make sure to place them in an area with plenty of sunlight. Your bushes should need about 25 to 50mm of water per week.

4. Protect Your Produce!

You'll need to keep your bushes safe from bugs, birds, and any other hungry creatures. You can do this by putting a frame of bamboo sticks around the plant and covering with a food-grade bird net.

5. Keep Up The Good Work!

Blueberry bushes can produce fruit for up to 20 years or so. To ensure that they last this long, be sure to give your blueberry bushes a good pruning every few years. Keep in mind that your bush most likely won't produce berries the year that you prune it, so it's best to have more than one bush and alternate pruning years so you aren't left completely berry-less.

6. Pick Them At The Opportune Moment

Your blueberry buds will generally start popping out in the early Spring. After they turn that beautiful shade of blue, don't pick them right away! Wait a few days while they reach the perfect level of ripeness. Once they are ripe the berries will fall right off the bush into your hands. It's also important to grow your blueberries organically whenever possible, as they have previously landed on the Environmental Working Group's 'Dirty Dozen' list of foods with the most pesticide residues. Freezing blueberries is also an excellent way to keep plenty of them on hand for smoothies, salads and healthy diet supplementation out of season. Be careful when buying them out of season as they often may have mould on them which is not ideal.

7. Pruning to ensure optimal growth and annual bearing

Once your plant has finished bearing it is important to immediately prune the bush down to a third of its size (Removing two thirds of the stems.) Pruning immediately after bearing and immediate fertilizer application of Talborne 6.3.4 shall ensure that your blueberry bush regrows a new flush of growth which shall be your bearing wood for the following year.



These products are essential for growing blueberries.

