

Massachusetts Master Gardener Association

FACT SHEET



Have Gardening Questions? The **Master Gardener Help Line Hours** are 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. on Fridays (all year) as well as Wednesdays (March-November) and Mondays (April-October).

Phone: 617-933-4929 Email: mghelpline@masshort.org.

Backyard Berries – Blueberries

Enjoy eating more flavorful blueberries when you grow your own. They also have antioxidants and play a part in anti-aging because they subdue free radicals that cause cell abnormality.

Need:

- Two blueberry plants (different cultivars recommended for larger berries, higher yield and earlier ripening)
- Space outdoors with lots of sun
- Shovel
- Mulch
- Pruning shears

1. Purchase your plants from a reputable nursery. Ask the gardener what variety is best for your zone to produce the type of berries you desire.

2. Choose a garden spot in full sun (6 – 8 hours of sunlight) and prepare the soil. They prefer moist, well-drained soil with pH from 4.5 to 5.5.

Plant the bushes following instructions for the variety purchased.

3. If using a container, it should be at least 36 inches in diameter. Fill with acidic potting mix.

4. Mulch with 2 to 4 inches of mulch to control weeds and maintain the soil moisture and temperature.

5. In the first four years, prune only the dead and diseased wood. After the fourth, year prune annually to shape the bushes and to promote berry growth.

The largest berries grow on the most vigorous one-year-old wood.

6. Fertilize in the spring with a half dose of an acid fertilizer or organic fertilizer.

7. Water so the soil stays moist but not saturated. Blueberries require frequent watering since the root systems are shallow.

8. You will probably need to cover your crops with netting or fencing to keep the birds, deer or other critters away.

9. Pick the berries when they are totally blue. Planting more than one cultivar extends the season.

10. Enjoy the fruits of your labor!

The Massachusetts Master Gardener Association is a non-profit organization whose mission is to share knowledge and experience with the public through outreach programs in education, horticulture and gardening; to provide the Master Gardener Training Program to interested members of the public; and to provide graduates of the Master Gardener Training Program with educational and practical opportunities to extend their knowledge and interests in gardening and related topics. <http://www.massmastergardeners.org/>