

# TRANSPLANTING BLUEBERRY

## Overview

Blueberries, one of the most important commercial berry crops in the United States, is highly sought after not just for its taste but also for its nutritional value.

Blueberries are small round dark blue and sweet berries grown for fresh consumption, for culinary use in muffins and pies, pressed for fresh juice, or later processing. Blueberries are also used for making jellies, jams, and syrups. The leaves of blueberry plants can be dried and used for tea.

There are several cultivars that can be grown in the southern US. The one found to outperform other cultivars in Alabama is the rabbiteye.

## STEP 1

Select the varieties to be planted. Although blueberries can self pollinate, selecting more than one variety will encourage cross pollination leading to better fruiting. Consider chilling hours and the planting zone before making a decision. Also, note that the best time to transplant blueberries is in the fall (after the plant has gone dormant) or early spring. More information on chilling hours can be found at [www.aces.edu/pubs/docs/A/ANR-0053-D/ANR-0053-D.pdf](http://www.aces.edu/pubs/docs/A/ANR-0053-D/ANR-0053-D.pdf)



## STEP 2

Select a good site for transplanting. Blueberries enjoy full sun. Additionally, check the soils pH, as blueberries require acidic soil with an optimal soil pH of 4.2-5.0.

## STEP 3

Dig a hole twice the width and height of the root system, which should be at least one foot in both depth and width. Prepare your soil medium. A soil medium of 1 part potting soil (for nutrition) to 1 part peat moss (for moisture) is recommended for transplanting blueberry plants.

#### STEP 4

Remove the blueberry plant from its container. Loosen the soil at the root, if the roots are large you may desire to trim away about 1/3 of the roots to encourage new growth. Blueberry plants require a well drained soil. If your soil is rich in clay, plant the blueberry bush on a raised bed to provide drainage and allow air to the roots. Blueberry roots are typically shallow and are sensitive to excess water, fertilizer, and compaction. Rain water that settles on the soil can create a bowl around the plant leading to drenching that kill the plants or encouraging root diseases.

#### STEP 5

Apply ½ pound of acid fertilizer/cubic foot of soil medium. Please note blueberries do not tolerate nitrate forms of nitrogen. Fertilizer should not be concentrated in a small area around the plant. Typically fertilizer designed for azalea and camellias is used according to package instructions.

#### STEP 6

Water your blueberry plant regularly. Your new plant will require 1-2 gallons of water per day during the growing season for the first year. Young plants require 3-4 gallons of water per day per plant, while, mature plants will require 8-12 gallons per day per plant. Drip irrigation is recommended if

you are establishing more than a few plants. For more information on irrigation, visit:

[www.aces.edu/anr/irrigation/](http://www.aces.edu/anr/irrigation/)

#### STEP 7

Mulch around the plant. Blueberry plants are not good competitors for nutrients and water. A thick layer of organic mulch such as pine straw, sawdust, or woodchips will be useful in maintaining moisture and soil pH, reducing weed competition, and lowering soil temperature.

#### STEP 8

Your blueberry plant will likely bloom the very first year it is planted. It is recommended that these blooms are removed and not allowed to develop fruit. Deciding not to remove these blooms can reduce canopy growth, delay plant establishment, and may result in plant death.

For more information on transplanting blueberry plants visit [www.aces.edu/pubs/docs/A/ANR-0904/ANR-0904.pdf](http://www.aces.edu/pubs/docs/A/ANR-0904/ANR-0904.pdf).

All of the publications referred to in this factsheet are available through your local County Extension Office.

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