



Blueberries

How do blueberries grow?

Blueberries grow on bushes planted in long rows. The blueberry bush is best planted and grown where summers are cool and the soil is acidic with plenty of water and good drainage. Blueberry bushes can live a long time. Plant them where they can grow undisturbed for 10 or more years.

Blueberry bushes flower in the spring and are pollinated by bees. Flowers are white or pink and bell-shaped. In summer, each flower forms a berry turning from green to pink or red and finally blue. Blueberries are picked by hand or by machines that gently shake each bush so ripe berries fall into a catching frame. In fall, the leaves of the blueberry bush turn crimson. In winter, young twigs and branches of blueberry bushes seem to glow red.



Check out this 2.33 minute video from Ontario Berry Growers Association – Explaining Ontario Blueberries <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OYW-wjs0B4I>

Joke Corner

Q: What made the stubborn blueberry such a smoothie?
A: Yogurt!

Q: What do you call it when a group of blueberries play jazz music?
A. A jam session.

Q: How do you make a blueberry shake?
A: Put it in the freezer.

Did you know?

- The blueberry is one of the only foods that is naturally blue in colour. The pigment that gives blueberries their distinctive colour—called anthocyanin—is the same compound that provides the blueberry’s amazing health benefits.
- Blueberries were called “star fruits” by North American Indigenous peoples because of the five-pointed star shape that is formed at the blossom end of the berry.
- A single blueberry bush can produce as many as 6,000 blueberries per year.

Where do blueberries come from?

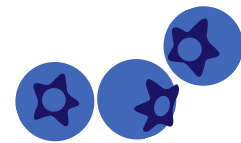
Blueberries are one of the only fruits native to North America with large crops in the Maritimes and coastal New England. Indigenous people have been eating blueberries for more than 13,000 years.

There are two basic types of blueberry bushes: lowbush and highbush. The lowbush grows wild and is farmed in Ontario and Eastern Canada. Lowbush varieties produce smaller berries and only provide a crop every second year. Wild Canadian lowbush blueberries are usually flash-frozen to help keep their shape and nutrients. You can find them in the grocery store freezer aisle. Highbush blueberries grow up 6-8 feet tall. Highbush berry plants are sensitive to winter damage, but their fruit is larger than the lowbush variety. British Columbia grows 93% of Canada's highbush blueberries.

Surprisingly, acid rain has increased the growth of wild lowbush berries in some areas by reducing the pH level of the soil.



The Science of Agriculture - Soil Experiment



There are many different types of soil. Certain types of plants such as wild blueberries prefer to grow in acidic soils with a pH between 4.5 and 5.0. Other plants such as carrots prefer a higher pH, between 6 and 7.

The pH (acidity or alkalinity) of soil can be tested using this experiment. Knowing the pH of soil can help you to determine what type of crop would grow best in that soil.

- Step 1** Collect several soil samples from various places around your community (about 1 cup of each).
- Step 2** In clean jars, mix each soil sample with 1 cup of distilled water. (Distilled water, available in grocery and drug stores, is neutral, having a pH of 7.)
- Step 3** Shake each sample thoroughly.
- Step 4** After a few minutes, dip a separate strip of pH test paper (litmus paper) into each sample and quickly compare the strip to the colors on the pH chart. You should be able to see some difference in the pH levels and decide which areas would be most suitable to grow wild blueberries.