

## Hardy Blueberries

### Care Upon Arrival

**Bare-root plants need special care upon arrival. Please read the following instructions to help your new plants get off to a good start.**

Your blueberry plants may arrive bare-root with little or no visible growth. This is normal. Upon arrival, open the packaging and check to make sure the roots feel moist. If they are dry, sprinkle the roots with water until they are moist but not soaked. If you have any questions about the appearance or condition of your plants when they arrive, please call us immediately.

Never expose the bare roots of plants to wind or sun before or during planting. If your ground is frozen, or for some other reason you are not ready to plant, soak the roots in a bucket of lukewarm water for up to 24 hours (no longer). You can then delay planting for a week or two if you keep the roots moist and in a dark, cool place where the temperature is above freezing. If the weather is warm, it is best to plant immediately.

**Do not** store a dormant bare-root plant in a warm place, such as in your house, for more than a week or so. Plants stored under

warm conditions are much more likely to be damaged by cold spring weather than are plants kept cool (ideally 35 to 40 degrees F).

### Soil Needs

We highly recommend that you have your soil tested when planting blueberries. For healthy growth, blueberries require an acid soil with a pH of 4.5 to 5.5. You can consult your local Cooperative Extension service for a soil test and advice on how to lower your soil pH if necessary.

You can also test soil pH yourself using a pH Test Kit. To lower soil pH rapidly, you can either apply a fertilizer that's formulated for azaleas, hollies and other acid-loving shrubs, or an elemental sulfur (See *Ordering Information*).

You can also lower the pH of your soil more gradually by digging in lots of peat moss and pine needles. It may take a year or more to see a change. Once the soil is acidic enough, you can plant blueberries and maintain soil acidity by mulching heavily every year with pine needles and shredded oak leaves.

### Ordering Information

|         |       |                                     |
|---------|-------|-------------------------------------|
| #36-494 | ..... | Hardy Blueberries                   |
| #34-973 | ..... | pH Soil Tester                      |
| #35-739 | ..... | Garden Sulfur, 5 lb                 |
| #07-300 | ..... | All-Purpose Fertilizer (5-5-5), 5lb |

*To place an order, please call us or visit our web site for current prices.*

## About the Varieties

You have received two varieties of easy-to-grow blueberries that ripen in succession from early to late summer. Both varieties are hardy in Zones 4 through 7.

'Blueray' is an early mid-season variety that produces large, dark blue berries with sweet, high-quality flavor. The bush is vigorous, productive and winter hardy and grows to a height of 4 to 6 feet. 'Blueray' is widely planted throughout the northeast and Midwest.

'Jersey' is a late season variety that is easy to grow. It is high-yielding and one of the oldest and most widely grown blueberry varieties. The berries are dark blue, medium in size, and very sweet. The bush grows tall, with a nice shape making it an attractive plant to have in your landscape.

Both varieties in this collection are delicious in cereal and fruit salad, for making pies and ice cream, or for eating straight off the bush.

## Planting Instructions

For each plant, dig a hole that is twice as wide and deep as the diameter of the root system. Set plants 4 to 5 feet apart in rows 8 to 12 feet apart. The planting hole should be large enough to allow the entire root system to be covered. The plants should be

set into the planting hole at the same depth they were growing in the nursery. (You should be able to see a soil line around the stem which will indicate how deep it was planted in the nursery.) Spread the roots out and position each plant so that all the roots will be covered with soil. Be careful not to plant too deeply, and do not let the roots dry out during the planting process.

Mix into the planting hole any peat moss that is packaged with the plant. Use more peat moss (if available) in heavier soils. If you use peat moss or a planting mix that contains peat, make sure that it is thoroughly saturated with water before putting it in the planting hole. Peat that is not saturated can wick moisture away from the plant and cause the roots to dry out. Pack the soil back in firmly around the roots and water thoroughly.

## Water

Plants should be watered weekly during their first year, unless they receive plenty of rain.

## Fertilizer

Wait 4 to 6 weeks after planting before adding any fertilizer. Do not apply fertilizer in late summer or fall. This could stimulate new succulent growth that could become injured during winter.

We recommend using a balanced fertilizer for overall plant health such as our 5-5-5 All-Purpose Fertilizer. This slow release fertilizer contains sulfate of potash (potassium sulfate) which is good for blueberries. Do not use fertilizer which contains potassium chloride which can adversely affect blueberries.

Yellow leaves on blueberries can be quickly corrected with a foliar application of 1 tablespoon of iron chelate in a gallon of water sprayed over the leaves. You should see greener leaves in a few days. However, be aware that yellowing leaves may be a symptom that the soil pH is too high. Have your soil tested for pH and amend it as needed.

After 2 to 3 years, you should see 12 to 18 inches of new growth per year. If not, check your soil pH and continue to amend the soil with compost and fertilizer as needed.

## Flower Removal and Pruning

It is very important during the first year that your plants become well-established with a strong root system and a lot of new shoots. Remove all flowers during the first year and do not allow any berries to develop. Do not prune your blueberry plants during the first two years.

After two years, you can begin to prune annually, during the dormant period only. Remove weak branches and any branches

less than 6 inches long. Mature, heavy branches in the center should be removed to allow better air circulation and sun penetration. The goal is to have about 12 stems per plant with a good mix of old and new. Any stems more than 2 inches in diameter should be removed.

## Mulch

Sawdust mulch is commonly spread along the entire row of blueberries with extra sawdust mounded around the canes, often to a depth of 8 or more inches.

## Bird Netting

The best way to protect fruit from being damaged or eaten by birds is to cover it with netting. Bird netting should be installed at least 2 to 3 weeks before the fruit matures. (See *Ordering Information* on the back of this bulletin.)