

BUCHANAN'S

NATIVE PLANTS

Growing Blueberries In Containers and Raised Beds

Why Blueberries?

Blueberry bushes produce delicious fruit that is packed with anti-oxidants. Their spring flowers and exceptional fall color make them a respectable ornamental as well. No significant disease or insects bother them in the Houston area, as long as you meet their soil and moisture requirements.

Why Containers/Raised Beds?

The hardest part of growing blueberries in Houston is managing the soil. Since blueberries don't like Houston soils (too alkaline and heavy), we highly recommend growing in containers or raised beds where you have total control of the soil mix. You can use **Nature's Way Blueberry Soil** or you can mix your own. See our recipe for blueberry soil on the other side of this sheet.

Which Containers?

Any **15-25 gallon container with good drainage** holes will do. We have many options from nursery liners to decorative patio planters. Or you could build a raised bed as you would for vegetables.

Which Varieties?

Blueberry bushes produce far more berries if you plant at least two varieties. Buchanan's carries several varieties that do well in our area. But a simple, proven method is to plant one "Tiff Blue" and one other variety.

Chill Hours

Chill hours are hours during which the temperature range is between 32 degrees and 45 degrees Fahrenheit in the winter prior to blooming and fruiting. If your bush does not receive the number of chill hours specified for its variety, it will not bear as much fruit.

In the Houston area, expected average chill hours vary by your location. Gulf and bay areas, Hobby Airport and inner-city areas average 300 or fewer chill hours per year. Pasadena and south bay area average 350 to 450 hours. The rest of Harris and Fort Bend counties average 400 to 600 hours. Counties north of Harris County average 600 to 900 hours.

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Blueberry Care

- Give your blueberries plenty of sun and space. A minimum of eight hours of direct sun is needed for a fruitful harvest.
- Organic fertilizers are perfect for blueberries because the shrubs like the slow, steady release of nutrients. Using **MicroLife for Azaleas** every three months will provide an even flow of nutrients while helping to maintain the soil acidity. **Cotton seed meal** also works quite well. If you want to do more, using a liquid fertilizer like **Super Seaweed or Ocean Harvest** will give your plants a boost every two weeks during the growing season.
- Blueberries also appreciate consistent moisture. That means using well-draining soil, a large container and a thick layer of mulch – at least 3 inches deep.
- Blueberries have lots of fans – especially birds! If you don't want to share most of your crop with your feathered friends, cover the bushes with **bird netting** once the berries start to ripen.

Use Nature's Way Blueberry Soil or mix your own:

Super Soil for Blueberries in Containers

- 2 bags LP Potting Soil
- 1 bag Cotton Burr Compost
- ½ bag Expanded Shale
- 2 cups Greensand
- 1 ½ cups MicroLife Azalea Fertilizer
- 1 bag Pine Bark Mulch

Mix all the ingredients except the mulch until they are evenly blended.

Fill the container half way with this mix. Water the soil in to settle it with no air spaces. Continue to fill the container to 5 inches below the top. Plant your blueberry plant(s) no deeper or shallower than it was in its original pot. Again, water in to settle the soil. Add soil to even it out (if needed) and cover it with 4 inches of mulch.

*This and other plant care tip sheets are available at buchanansplants.com
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