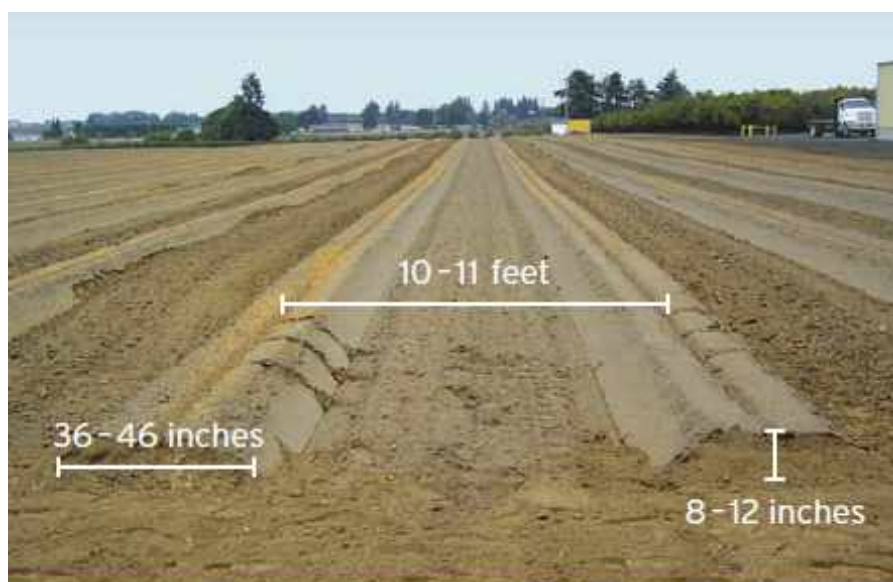


# **BLUEBERRY PLANTING INSTRUCTIONS**

## **Blueberry Requirements:**

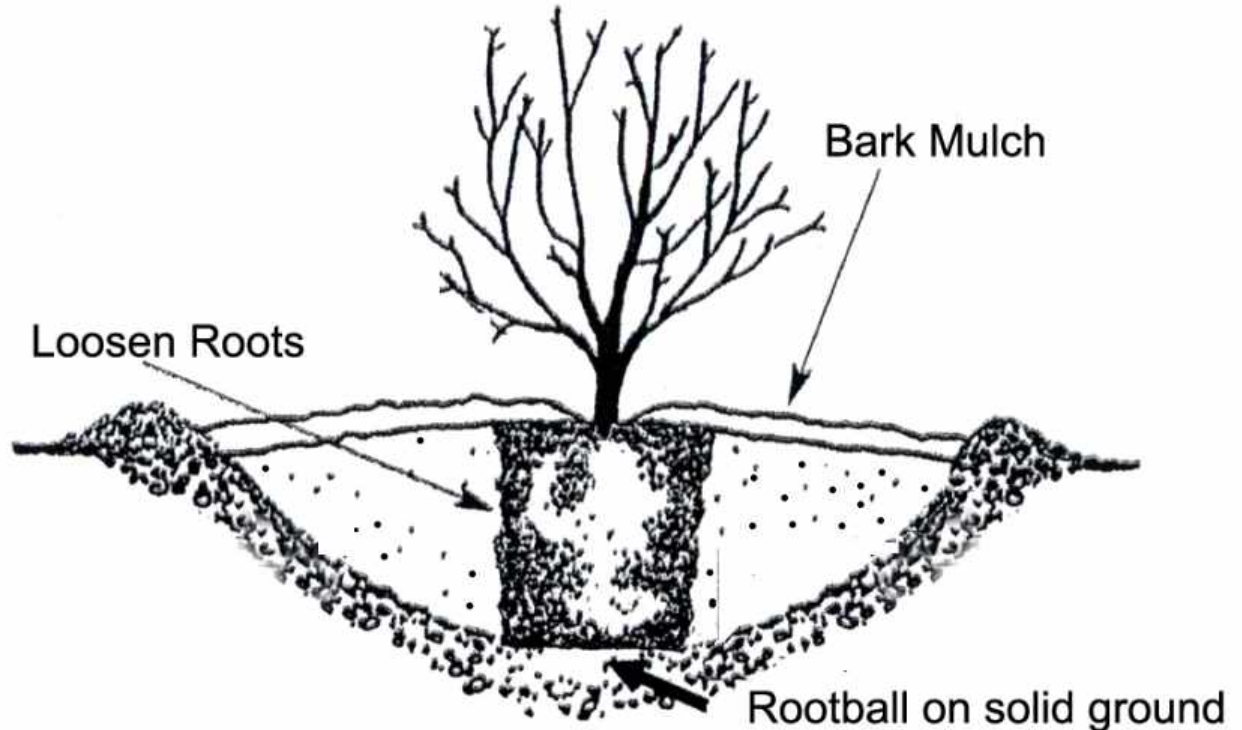
Blueberry plants have a shallow fibrous root system and do very well on a raised beds or mounds.

1. **Location:** Need Full Sunlight and Well-Drained Soil. Plants will tolerate partial shade, but as shade increases, plants produce fewer blossoms and fruit production declines. Avoid areas surrounded by trees, which provide too much shade, compete with plants for water and nutrients, and interfere with air movement around plants. Poor air movement increases danger of spring frost injury to blossoms and favors disease development.
2. **Soil:** Blueberries require acid soil with a pH of 4.5 to 4.8. We highly recommend you have your soil checked to ensure the proper pH. You can take a soil sample to your local County Extension Office. If the pH is too high, the growth of the plant is slowed and the foliage turns yellow. If the pH is too high for an extended period of time, the plants will die. Remember: Blueberry plants are long-lived so considerable time and effort in preparing the soil is a wise investment.  
When the pH is too high, ground sulfur or ammonia sulfate should be applied to increase the soil acidity. Five hundred pounds of sulfur per acre will change pH of 5.5 to 4.4 in lightly sandy soils. If pH is too low, dolomitic limestone applied at necessary rate will raise the pH. Soil test should be made annually.
3. **Pollination** – Most Northern Highbush and Southern Highbush varieties are self-fertile. All blueberries benefit from the transfer of pollen to one variety from a different variety for proper fruit set, larger fruit and higher yield. Rabbiteye varieties do require cross-pollination. We recommend that you have at least 3 different varieties planted to get the maximum fruit set.
3. **Spacing:** Ideal plant spacing is 2.5-3' apart in the row. Plant rows about 10 feet apart.



## Planting Instructions:

1. **Planting** - When digging the planting hole, remember that blueberry plants have a dense, shallow root system. A wide hole will be more important than a deep one. To prepare the planting hole, dig it deep enough to allow the plant to be placed in it at the same depth as it grew in the nursery (you can often see a soil line on the branches) and wide enough to allow the roots to be spread out completely.



Plant in a mix of 50% ground soil and 50% shavings, wood compost or peat moss. Pine, fir or redwood bark are excellent, do not use cedar. For denser soils you may use a higher percent of the bark / peat.

2. **Mulch** - Mulch the plants with 4 to 6 inches of pine straw, ground pine bark, or well rotted sawdust. Surface mulch helps maintain uniform soil moisture and will also discourage weed growth. Replenish the mulch as needed. (Note: We do not recommend using leaves, grass clippings and/or layers of newspaper, that mat down and will deprive the blueberry roots of needed oxygen.)
3. **Water** – Water the plants frequently enough to keep the soil moist but not saturated. Blueberries prefer consistent moisture, but not wet feet.
4. **Fertilization** – Roots are very sensitive to readily soluble fertilizers and can be injured with excessive amounts. So be sure and do not over fertilize these plants, as it can cause root burn. Plants should be fertilized twice during the first growing season; early March with two ounces of 12-4-8. Keep fertilizer at least one foot away from plants in a circle. You could also use Azalea Food Fertilizer or Miracle Grow's Product called Mir-Acid. This should be repeated again in mid-June. If you notice yellowing on the plants, you can use one ounce of ammonia sulfate. Note: Do not use Calcium Nitrate around plants. Nitrates can be toxic to blueberries.

**Pruning** - Pruning blueberries is one of the keys to success for getting the best yields and harvest from your plants. Pruning should be done when the plant have gone dormant in the winter. You prune to thin the plant, remove any dead or crossing wood and shape the plant. Some general rules of thumb:

- “If it isn’t growing up, it gets cut out”
- Remove dead and crossing wood
- Leave the best and strongest new growth canes
- Remove about 1/3 of the plant at least every other season



**Step 1** - Start by removing long shoots coming up from base, as indicated in yellow, that spoil the shrub's shape and appearance.

**Step 2** - Remove all branches that are lying on the ground as well as all the broken, diseased, dead, or crisscrossing branches.

**Step 3** - Thin out about 1/3 of the oldest branches, leaving no stubs. After blooming the next season cut out about 1/3 of the oldest and all of the dead branches and repeat year after year.

## Fruiting Cycle

Blueberries take about 3 seasons to get into a strong full fruit production cycle. Typically a one gallon field ready plant is a two season plant. Two year plants will typically flower and fruit during the next growth cycles, as tempting as it may be to have that first fruit harvest, we recommend you strip all the flowers and any fruit off the plant that first growing cycle, to establish the plant, letting most it’s energy go towards establishing a solid root system vs. fruit. Having patience that first year, it will pay off for many years following.