



Growing Blueberries in Containers

Those of us who garden in limited space can still experience the joy and healthful benefits of growing blueberries. Blueberries are ideal container plants and require little care, once established. Besides providing fruit they have lovely landscape qualities as well: in the spring they bring forth delicate white flowers, resembling Lily-of-the-Valley & Pieris, in summer the attractive foliage is the perfect foil for the beautiful blue berries, & in fall their foliage glows with red hues from burgundy to flame rivaling that of the overused burning bush. The most important considerations when growing blueberries in containers are: selection of the proper blueberry variety, selection of a container, the growing medium, & the establishment of an effective care routine.

What blueberry variety is suitable of container growing?

The dwarf blueberry Tophat is an ideal choice for container growing. It is quite compact and dense with an appearance similar to that of Nandina. It has crops of small, sweet berries that are like those found on wild species, a favorite of many who have harvested them. It will eventually reach a height of 24 inches and, in time, will fill any container. When dormant in winter it has a very intriguing appearance similar to a Bonsai plant. The bare canes have an interesting appearance due to exfoliating bark on older canes and the green of newer growth.

What container should I choose?

A container that is 24 inches wide and 16 inches or more deep is adequate for the permanent growth of a Tophat blueberry although a whiskey barrel is even better since it will allow for a larger plant that will provide more fruit.

What planting medium should I use?

A 50/50 percent mixture of sphagnum peat moss (Canadian) and topsoil will provide an ideal growing medium.

How should I go about planting my blueberry?

Make sure to thoroughly moisten the growing medium before planting, then place the plant in the middle of the container about 2 inches below the surface of the soil/peat mix as the medium will settle over time. Apply a time-release fertilizer (your garden center can advise you on the proper fertilizer for this acid-loving plant). Remember to allow room on the top of your growing media for a layer of mulch. After planting it is wise to place a 4 inch layer of mulch on the surface, avoiding placing it directly next to the plant itself. Leaving this area mulch-free will maximize the development of new canes. Now place your container in full sun.

What is an effective care routine for my containerized blueberry?

Mulch is usually effective in retaining adequate moisture (from rains) during most of the year, but additional watering will be required during dry periods. It is important to keep the soil moist, but not wet. Other than this your labor will consist of picking the fruit.

Blueberries will last forever, if properly cared for, and can feed you for a lifetime. So enjoy – here's to your health!