

Tips for planting blueberries

VA trip to the produce aisle at a local grocery store can unveil a host of healthy additions to anyone's diet. Such a jaunt also can raise eyebrows, as produce, particularly organic fruits and vegetables, can be very expensive. Consumers may feel helpless to corral the cost of healthy foods like fruits and vegetables, but all hope should not be lost. That's especially so for people willing to give gardening a try. Blueberries are one of the healthiest foods people can eat. The USDA National Nutrient Database notes that blueberries, which are low in calories

and high in fiber, are great sources of the vitamins C, K and B6. However, organic blueberries can be among the most expensive foods in the produce aisle. Various factors, including where blueberries come from and whether or not they're organic, dictate their cost. But it's not uncommon to pay roughly \$4 for a six-ounce package of organic blueberries. For some, such costs are prohibitive.

Growing blueberries in a home garden can save blueberry lovers substantial amounts of money while ensuring they reap all of the benefits of this highly nutritious and edible berry. The following are some tips novices can employ as they plant their first batch of blueberries.

Consult a local garden center.

The U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council recommends consulting a local garden center before planting blueberries. The professionals at such centers can recommend the best variety of blueberry to plant. That's an important first step, as the USHBC notes that farmers cultivate dozens of varieties of highbush blueberries across North America. Lowbush varieties also may be a gardener's best option depending on where he or she lives. A local garden center can help you determine which variety best suits your local climate.

Plant where there is ample sun and well-drained soil. The roots of blueberry plants should remain moist throughout the growing season, so choose an area where the soil drains well. If that's hard to find, consider planting in raised beds or patio containers. In addition, the University of Minnesota Extension notes that blueberries require full sun, so plant in a spot where the blueberries will not be denied daily sunlight.



Prepare the soil. Blueberries require acidic soil, so running a soil test prior to planting is a good idea. Speak with a local garden center about soil adjustments if the soil is unlikely to promote growth.

Fertilize carefully. The USHBC notes that established blueberry plants will respond well to acid fertilizers. However, it's important not to overdo it, as blueberries are sensitive to overfertilization.

Follow fertilization instructions and speak with local garden center professionals for advice.

Be patient. The UME notes that plants won't bear much fruit in their first two to three years, and that harvests are bigger after five years. So patience is a virtue blueberry planters must embrace.

Planting blueberries can be a rewarding hobby that also can save gardeners money at the grocery store.



**Safe
Exterminating
Company, Inc.**

nobugs4me.com

706-692-5360

Serving Jasper since 1989

**Spring Special
\$150**

Denson
HEATING & AIR CONDITIONING CO., INC.

Jerry Denson

700 South Main St • P.O. Box 58 • Jasper, GA 30143
706-253-3554 • 706-697-3554 • Cell 678-230-0373
(Fax) 706-253-3509 • jdenson@ellijay.com