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How to Grow Blueberries in Colorado

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Colorado gardeners long for the ability to successfully grow blueberries. Colorado's soils are slightly to highly alkaline, meaning the pH value is somewhere above 7.0 (neutral.) Blueberries and their relatives must have acid soils to thrive. Blueberries prefer a soil pH of about 5.5. Unfortunately, there is no practical, cost-effective way to encourage Colorado soil to a pH level that low.

With a little extra effort, there is a way to grow blueberries in Colorado. The key to success is to plant the blueberry bush in a medium that is entirely (or primarily) composed of sphagnum peat moss. This medium has a pH of approximately 5.5. Two other factors include 1) making sure the root zone always stays moist, even during warm, dry spells in winter, and 2) protecting the bushes from dry, desiccating winds during the winter. Wrap bushes with burlap or old sheets while they are dormant.

Any planting method that incorporates these three elements should lead to success. Keep in mind that you will need at least two blueberry plants of different varieties for cross-pollination purposes.

For each plant:

1. Dig a hole 20" deep, 30" long and 20" wide.
2. Purchase a 3 cubic foot bale of sphagnum peat moss. Leave the plastic wrap on the bale.
3. Punch about a dozen holes in the bottom of the plastic wrap.
4. Drop the bale, holes down, into the hole.
5. Cut an 8"x8" X into the plastic on top of the bale and fold back plastic.
6. Plant a blueberry plant directly into the peat moss.
7. Re-close the X using tape. Leave about a 3" hole in the middle to accommodate the trunk of the bush.
8. Fertilize in early May and early July with a balanced fertilizer for acid-loving plants. Bath recommends Happy Frog Acid-Loving Plant Fertilizer.

(Optional) install drip irrigation line by cutting a small hole at either end of the bale and feeding the line through the holes, resulting in an irrigation line that runs on top of the peat but under the plastic.

Variety	Type	Zone	Fruit
Bluecrop	Highbush	4	Mid-July
Blueray	Highbush	4	Early August
Chippewa	Half-high	3	Early August
Duke	Highbush	4	Early July
Earliblue	Highbush	5	Early July
North Blue	Half-high	3	Mid-June
North Sky	Half-high	3	Late July
Patriot	Highbush	3	Late July