

**New Gippsland  
Seeds & Bulbs**



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## **CULTURAL NOTES FOR BLUEBERRIES**

Blueberries have delicious blue fruit that are ideal fresh or cooked in pies, muffins etc. They are a rich source of vitamins A & C plus minerals. Plants are mature at around seven years, and remain productive for up to twenty years.

The two main types are grown in Australia. These are:

**High Bush.** Plants up to 2 metres tall and suiting cold areas of Victoria, Tasmania and the southern highlands of New South Wales.

**Rabbits Eye.** Plants to 2 metres tall but suiting warmer areas with a greater heat and drought tolerance than high bush types.

**SITE:** Plenty of sunshine is required with shelter from strong winds. The soil must be well drained and high in organic matter. Ideally the soil pH will be between pH4.5 and pH5.5. In summary, if Rhododendrons and Azaleas thrive, then Blueberries will too!!

**SITE PREPARATION:** Ensure a high organic matter content in the soil, digging in generous quantities of compost or a green manure crop before planting. The mixing of a small amount of 9 month Osmocote or similar before planting will be beneficial. Ensure that the site is free of perennial weeds.

**SPACING:** Allow 1 to 1.5 metres between plants

**PLANTING:** Dormant plants should be planted out over winter, teasing out the fibrous roots. Plant with the base of the "trunk" just below soil level. Water in thoroughly to ensure that soil is in contact with the roots. Should plants be purchased in pots, wait until winter before planting into the soil.

**FEEDING:** Each spring feed with a light dressing of a complete artificial fertiliser, and again in early summer.

**CULTIVATION:** As Blueberry roots are very shallow and fibrous it is best to avoid cultivation too near the plants. For weed control mulch heavily or use "Weed Matting" near plants.

**WATERING:** Moist soils are essential, but waterlogging is detrimental. Ensure regular weekly watering in all dry conditions, particularly during the growth periods of spring and summer.

**VARIETIES:** Many varieties are available with a range of cropping times. This year we offer the following High Bush varieties.

**Blue Rose:** Heavy yield, Medium size fruit. Crops from late December.

**Denise:** Heavy cropping variety from mid December. Large fruit. Excellent in the Home garden.

**Margaret:** The earliest fruiting variety. Pick from early December. Good sized fruit.

**HARVESTING:** Fruit should be picked around 6 days after they turn blue. Pick the berries individually, taking care not to squash the fruit. Fruit keep quite well for up to 2 weeks after harvest and freeze readily for later use.

**PRUNING:** To aid in the establishment of the plants, remove any flowers in the first and second years after planting, at the same time nipping the tips of the shoots to encourage a bushy habit. After plants are 4 years old, cut back older shoots within 10 to 20 cm of the ground to encourage new shoots from the base. Repeat the above annually thereafter. Fruit is produced on 1 year old wood.

**PESTS & DISEASES:** Birds can be a major problem, with netting of the entire plant being the only satisfactory method of protection. Grubs can sometimes attack the fruit, but can be readily controlled with a spray of Dipel or Carbaryl. Grey Mould (Botrytis) may affect ripening fruit during wet periods.