



## RCW Nurseries, Inc. BLUEBERRIES



**Rabbiteye Blueberries (*Vaccinium ashei*)** are semi- evergreen shrubs that can grow to 15 feet tall with beautiful white flowers in the spring. Blueberries rarely have disease or insect problems and only need minimal pruning. We only sell Rabbiteye varieties because they are native to our area.

Rabbiteye Blueberries will produce fruit the very first season they are in the ground...but for the plant's sake, remove most of the harvest for the first year or two; just keep a few for yourself. The 3<sup>rd</sup> and every year after that, you will have a bountiful harvest of up to 40 pounds of fruit. Next time you're in the grocery store...do the math. You can expect to harvest berries from the end of May to the end of July. Some cultivars are early and some are late, so plant an assortment to extend the season.

Blueberries need soil that is **well drained, rich in organic matter and acidic**. Without a well prepared bed, your blueberries will not thrive. Planting them in a whiskey barrel, or a very large pot, has also proven to be very successful. Prepare the planting area by adding a minimum of 6 inches of Black Humus or compost that has been "cooking" for at least a year (less than a year and compost can sprout all kinds of weeds). Mix well and add granular sulfur to create an acidic condition, just follow the products directions. Apply an organic fertilizer and additional sulfur (if needed) when the blooming begins, in mid-May, and after the fruit has been harvested. Be careful not to over fertilize-- with use of an organic program the possibilities of this happening are remote.

Plant blueberries as you would an azalea by loosening the root ball and spreading out the roots. Add mulch around the plants, but not up to the trunk. Just like azaleas, too much mulch on blueberries is a death sentence. After planting, water thoroughly.

Blueberries are not self-pollinating, so plant at least two cultivars, which are listed on the reverse side. Plant them 5 or 6 feet apart, and alternate the varieties. Blueberries can get very large, and you will want to be able to get between and around them to pick all the berries. Watering blueberries regularly is important. Extended dry periods are as great a threat as poor drainage.

Prune blueberries after you have harvested all the fruit. Removal of old wood after the first 4 to 6 years will promote new growth and leads to heavier production...but your bushes will still bear without this pruning. Thinning the bushes aids in light penetration, making it easier to collect all the fruit. Keeping your bushes less than 7 feet tall will make harvesting convenient and safe.





# RCW Nurseries, Inc. BLUEBERRY Cultivars



**BECKY BLUE** Early ripening variety with sweet, medium to large, light blue berries. A tall spreading bush.

**BRIGHTWELL** An early to mid-season variety with medium-large, juicy, light blueberries with a sweet flavor. An upright, vigorous grower and a consistent producer that does best planted with Premier. Produces in between Climax and Tifblue.

**CLIMAX** The earliest ripening, medium sized, dark blueberries and a sweet flavor, one of the best for Houston. An upright plant with intense green foliage that does best planted with Premier. A great variety if you freeze, bake or can them...they all ripen in a very short time.

**PREMIER** Early to mid-season variety with large, light blue, quality fruit and an excellent flavor on a highly productive, upright bush. Grows 6 to 10 foot tall and can make an interesting hedge. Tifblue is the number one selection of blueberry in the country.

**TIFBLUE** Accepted as the benchmark for all rabbiteyes. Mid to late season, large, light blue fruit with good quality berries that hold up well on the plant. Has great fall color on an upright plant.

**WOODARD** Early to mid season variety with quality fruit when fully ripe. Do not pick this one too early. When young this variety will fruit more heavily than others. Medium height, good for a smaller yard.

