

Stokes' Blueberry Farms & Nursery, Inc.



Stokes' Blueberries FreshPro, Inc.



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A family owned and operated farm since 1978, we are located in the heart of blueberry country! Grand Junction is in southwest Michigan twelve miles east of the Lake Michigan shoreline. Our goal is to offer the highest quality, disease-free blueberry plants. We are always more than happy to give helpful advice on planting and growing the plants we sell.

Stokes' Blueberry Farms & Nursery are exclusively blueberries. We are blueberry plant propagators, processors and farmers. We propagate and sell more than one million blueberry plants annually in the state of Michigan, as well as in the Nation and overseas. We know blueberries and take pride in our blueberry plants. At Stokes' Blueberry Farms & Nursery, we work hard to serve our customers with old-fashioned values and excellent customer service.

Stokes Blueberries FreshPro, Inc.

We are beginning the 10th year of our family owned and operated blueberry processing facility. This facility processes and packages more than six million pounds of blueberries yearly that are sold throughout the world. In our facility, we process and pack our own blueberry crop as well as the crops of approximately one hundred area farmers.

We wholesale fresh blueberries during the Michigan harvest. We custom pack or sell in bulk quantity per our customers request. In our fresh pack facility, we package over one million pounds per year. Our fresh packed blueberries are then shipped to supermarkets, farm markets, and bakeries. We also sell to city produce markets in the Midwest of North America.

Blueberries are native to southwest Michigan and the quality and flavor are found to be superior to other regions in the U.S. and world market.

Thank you...

...for considering Stokes' Blueberry Farms & Nursery for your blueberry planting needs.

This booklet was designed to answer some of your most commonly asked questions. If you have any further questions, we are only a phone call away. You will find our phone number, fax, email address, and website on the back of this booklet.

Stokes' Blueberry Farms & Nursery

Plant Descriptions

Berry Features				Bush Features		
Northern High Bush Varieties						
Variety	Season	Size	Flavor	Uses	Mature Size	Bush Shape
Earliblue Zones 7-5	Very Early	M-L	Sweet	Fresh Pack Process U-Pick / Fresh Market	4 – 6 ft.	Upright
<i>First to ripen. Medium-Large, light blue, delicious, sweet-flavored berries. The upright bush produces stout canes with bright red wood and large glossy green leaves. Plant where blueberries are well suited and avoid frost pockets.</i>						
Bluetta Zones 7-4	Very Early	M	Tangy	Fresh Pack Process U-Pick / Fresh Market	3 – 5 ft.	Upright Compact
<i>Ripens with Earliblue. Medium sized dark blue berries with tangy blueberry flavor. Bluetta yields more than Earliblue and is more adaptable to colder climates or areas with late spring frosts. The dense globe form and scarlet red fall foliage make Bluetta an excellent selection for landscaping.</i>						
Duke Zones 7-4	Early	L	Mildly Sweet	Fresh Pack Process U-Pick / Fresh Market	4 – 6 ft.	Stocky Upright
<i>Large light blue berries with mildly sweet flavor. This attractive berry is quite firm and retains its fresh quality longer than most varieties. Duke blooms late but ripens early which protects the blossoms from spring frost. It is one of the heaviest, most consistent producers, often yielding more than 20 pounds per bush when mature. Duke bushes are upright growers but the branches will droop to the ground when laden with fruit. The foliage turns yellow-orange in fall.</i>						
Spartan Zones 7-5	Early	VL	Tangy Sweet	Fresh Pack U-Pick / Fresh Market	5 – 6 ft.	Upright
<i>Spartan features on of the most attractive and best flavored berries of any cultivar. It is light blue, very large with a delicious tangy sweet flavor. The large glossy green leaves turn orange and yellow in the fall. Can be particular about soil types, requiring well-drained sandy loam with lots of organic matter.</i>						
Patriot Zones 7-3	Early	L	Tangy	U-Pick / Fresh Market	3 – 4 ft.	Open Spread
<i>Patriot was selected at the University of Maine for home gardeners requiring a cold hardy variety that would bear consistent crops of large sized fruit. Production is high, ranging between 10-20 pounds at maturity. The berries are dark blue and highly flavored. It is adaptable to many soil types and will perform better in wetter soils than many other varieties. Patriot makes an excellent landscape variety with its showy white blooms in the spring, dark green summer foliage and fiery orange fall colors.</i>						
Sierra Zones 7-4	Early	M-L	Mildly Sweet	Fresh Pack Process U-Pick / Fresh Market	5 – 7 ft.	Upright
<i>This USDA release has shown very good production on some sites and not so well on others. We suggest a test planting on your site. This variety is an excellent U-Pick variety. The fruit is medium size and firm with good flavor and a small scar. A medium size bush that is generally productive.</i>						

Berry Features					Bush Features	
Northern High Bush Varieties						
Variety	Season	Size	Flavor	Uses	Mature Size	Bush Shape
Bluejay Zones 7-4	Early - Mid	M-L	Mild	Process U-Pick / Fresh Market	6 – 7 ft.	Upright
<i>This extremely vigorous variety will grow almost twice as fast as most other blueberries. Bluejay features ample crops of medium to large, mild flavored berries that will stay on the bush for long periods without loss of fruit quality. Bluejay is a large bush with light green summer foliage, yellow-orange leaves in the fall and bright yellow winter wood.</i>						
Blueray Zones 7-4	Mid	L-VL	Sweet	U-Pick / Fresh Market	4 – 5 ft.	Upright Open
<i>An old favorite. A heavy producer of high quality, large, powder blue berries with outstanding dessert flavor. Blueray performs particularly well in areas with hot summers and very cold winters. The stunning rosy pink flowers turn bright white in full bloom turning burgundy in fall.</i>						
Bluecrop Zones 7-4	Mid	L	Sweet	Fresh Pack Process U-Pick / Fresh Market	4 – 6 ft.	Upright Open
<i>Considered the best all-around variety for consistent yields, large high quality fruit and disease resistance. There are other varieties with better ornamental value but none better in the garden. This is the leading commercial variety in North America.</i>						
Nelson Zones 7-4	Late-Mid	L-VL	Mildly Sweet	Fresh Pack Process U-Pick / Fresh Market	4 – 6 ft.	Upright
<i>This is a very productive, upright, fine flavored variety. Provides large, firm berries with small, dry scars, this variety also works well in a U-Pick operation. In some regions, it is used to fill picking season between midseason and late varieties.</i>						
Rubel Zones 7-4	Late-Mid	S	Sweet	Process	4 – 6 ft.	Upright
<i>Do your customers ask for blueberries with the flavor they remember as kids? Offer them Rubel, the "heritage" blueberry. A true wild selection from the early 1900's, Rubel has remained popular due to its delectable full flavor and small berries, perfect for pies and muffins. Current research has shown that Rubel's antioxidant levels score almost twice as high as most other blueberries, truly making it the reigning "king" of health foods! Rubel is a strong, upright bush to 6 feet. It is cold hardy and a consistent producer. Foliage turns bright fire-red in fall.</i>						
Burlington Zones 7-4	Late	S-M	Mild	Fresh Pack Process U-Pick / Fresh Market	6 – 7 ft.	Upright
<i>One of the largest blueberry bushes, with height easily reaching seven feet at maturity. The fruit is small to medium size. It is known to be very productive in some areas. This sturdy upright variety fits well in the landscape. Makes for a nice privacy hedge.</i>						

Berry Features					Bush Features	
Northern High Bush Varieties						
Variety	Season	Size	Flavor	Uses	Mature Size	Bush Shape
Jersey Zones 7-4	Late	S-M	Sweet	Fresh Pack Process U-Pick / Fresh Market	6 – 7 ft.	Upright
<i>One of the oldest and most widely grown of all varieties, Jersey is a favorite for home gardeners wanting an easy to grow, heavy producing late season variety. This bush tolerates a wide range of soil types. The dark blue, small to medium sized fruit is very sweet and a favorite for baking. A reliable producer year after year.</i>						
Elliott Zones 7-4	Very Late	M-L	Tangy	Fresh Pack	4 – 6 ft.	Upright
<i>Elliott's finish out the blueberry season lasting through September. The late bloom period that avoids most spring frosts and the typically heavy bud set warrants extra pruning, but the bountiful crops of larger fruit are worth the effort. This berry can be quite tart if picked when not fully ripe, but is beautiful with its burgundy wood and grey-green foliage.</i>						
Half-High Bush Varieties						
North Country Zones 7-3	Early - Mid	M	Wild	Fresh Pack U-Pick / Fresh Market	1.5-2 ft.	Compact Spread
<i>Northcountry reaches 1-2 feet high and 3 feet in diameter. It is vigorous and adaptable in less than optimum soil types. Summer foliage is dark green with turning scarlet red in fall. The fruit of Northcountry is medium size with an appealing sweet "wild" blueberry flavor. Yields will range between 2 and 5 pounds per mature bush. With its unique characteristics, Northcountry is one of the best varieties for the edible landscape.</i>						
Northland Zones 7-3	Early - Mid	M	Sweet	Process	4 – 7 ft.	Upright Spread
<i>The most cold-hardy highbush variety grown. Reaches about 4 feet high and 4 feet wide at maturity. A very productive variety, often yielding more than 20 pounds per bush when mature. The berries are excellent for jams and baking because of their high sugar content. It is easy to grow and adaptable to many soil types. Northland's cold hardiness extends the area where highbush blueberries can be successfully raised. The bright yellow wood and compact shape fit well in the landscapes.</i>						
Northsky Zones 7-3	Mid	S	Wild	Fresh Pack U-Pick / Fresh Market	1-1.5 ft.	Compact Mound
<i>Northsky is the most cold hardy of all blueberries, surviving winter temperatures of -45F. The bush grows to about 12-18" tall and 2-3' wide. Northsky begins spring completely covered in snow-white blooms with dense, small glossy green leaves in summer and brilliant red fall color. Yields range from 1-2 pounds per bush. Northsky is particularly well suited for container growing, borders or group plantings in the landscape. Self-pollinating.</i>						
Northblue Zones 7-3	Mid	L	Wild	U-Pick / Fresh Market	2 – 3 ft.	Upright Open
<i>Northblue is a proven producer of quality fruit in cold climates. It has a slightly taller more open stature, reaching 2-3 feet tall. Northblue is a consistent producer of large firm quality fruit. Yield is 3-7 pounds per mature bush. Excellent for baking or fresh eating. Northblue has survived winter temperatures -35F although production is maximized when snow protection is adequate. Recommended for those desiring a high yielding cold-hardy variety.</i>						



◆ Duke bloom



◆ Duke berries



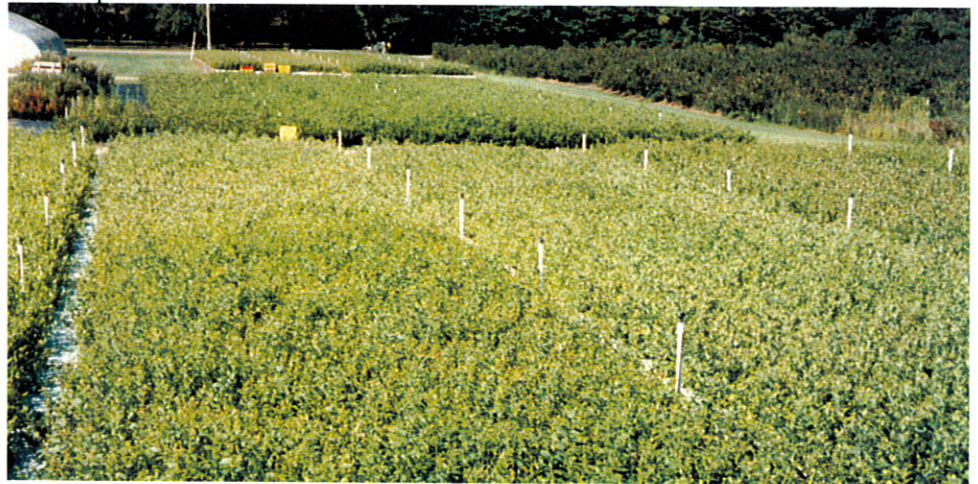
◆ Jersey bloom



◆ Elliott fall colors



◆ Bluecrop bloom



◆ Blueberry plant nursery stock

Plant Selection and Propagation

The most critical factor in establishing a blueberry planting is to obtain high quality plant material. Purchase only inspected plants which have a state certificate of inspection.

Several characteristics should be considered when a variety is selected: season of ripening, yield, fruit quality, hardness, chilling requirement, growth habit, vigor, disease resistance, local adaptation, and intended market.

The fruit on each variety ripens over 2 to 5 weeks. Varieties with successive ripening periods extend the harvest season. The potential harvest season in North America ranges from 4 to 5 months. That includes hand picked and mechanical harvesting.

The performance of the most commonly planted varieties can be predicted for most regions, but small test blocks of new releases should be established before planting on a large scale.

Growth and Development

A blueberry bush is somewhat slow growing. Production starts the third year after planting with full production around the seventh or eighth year. Blueberry bushes also have a long life. Many Michigan blueberry farms are still producing well after 60 years.

We propagate and grow our plants the traditional way, from hardwood cuttings. In the mid 1980s, when tissue culture propagation became popular, we did experiment with growing tissue culture plants and found them to be very weak and fragile.

Some varieties of tissue culture blueberry plants took on different characteristics such as growing like a vine rather than a bush. These plants were also more susceptible to virus and disease, especially within the first two years. Because of these problems, most blueberry plants are again propagated from hardwood cuttings.



Site Selection and Preparation

Selecting a good site for a blueberry planting is one of the most important decisions that a grower will make. The soil pH is not as critical as once believed. If the natural soil pH is between 3.8 and 5.8, we recommend planting first, then adjusting the pH later if needed. Some nutrients are tied up when you lower the natural pH.

Additive recommendations.

Elemental sulfur ¹ needed to lower pH to 4.5 (lb/acre)				Potash and phosphate recommendations			
Current pH	Soil Type			Soil Test (ppm)*	Recommended Rate (lb/acre)		
	Sand	Loam	Clay		K ₂ O	P ₂ O ₅	Organic Soils
5.0	175	530	800	0-10	90	150	100
5.5	350	1030	1600	10-20	75	125	75
6.0	530	1540	2300	20-30	60	100	50
6.5	660	2020	3030	30-40	30	50	0
7.0	840	2560	3830	40-50	20	0	0
				>50	0	0	0

¹To substitute aluminum sulfate, multiply by 6; ferrous sulfate, multiply by 8. *To convert ppm soil test to lb per acre (to 6.7-inch depth), multiply by 2.



Establishing the Blueberry Planting

The blueberry planting should be planned to use land efficiently and to accommodate equipment for pest control, mowing and harvest. Two common plant densities for commercial plantings are 3x10, with plants spaced 3 feet apart and rows 10 feet apart for 1,450 plants per acre, and 4x10, with plants spaced 4 feet apart and rows 10 feet apart for 1,089 plants per acre. The amount of fertilizer, material, time, etc. used is the same for both.

If your berries will be harvested P.Y.O., 4x10 is a better choice. The rows should be no longer than 200 feet so the customer does not have to carry fruit long distances.

A more efficient use of land and mechanical harvesting and a greater yield can be gained by planting 3x10. A spacing of 10 feet between rows is required for equipment to move through the field adequately.

Blueberry plants may be planted in the spring or fall. It is important not to plant too deep. Set plants at the depth they were planted at the nursery. The application of an organic mulch will help suppress weeds, moderate soil temperature, enhance the soil's moisture level, and increase organic matter. Softwood sawdust is the most commonly used mulching material for blueberry plants with wood chips, bark, straw, corn stalks, and combinations of these materials also suitable. Mulching is desirable but not necessary in soil with a high organic matter content. When mulching, apply the layer no more than 3 to 5 inches thick.

CARE AND MAINTENANCE

Newly set blueberry plants may be fertilized 3 to 4 weeks after planting and again in 4 more weeks. Apply either a complete fertilizer formulated for use on acid-loving plants or ammonium sulfate (21-0-0). Use the equivalent of 6 pounds per acre actual nitrogen (1/2 ounce ammonium sulfate per plant).

In addition to the above fertilizer, we recommend the use of a water soluble fertilizer such as Miracid by Miracle Grow. Most nursery supply companies will carry water soluble 9-45-15 in 25 pound bags. Mix according to the directions on the bag and apply to the roots of the blueberry plants prior to planting in the spring. When planting in fall, wait until spring and apply 1/2 to 1 gallon per plant.



To our customers...

Choosing the right blueberry variety for your planting needs can be perplexing. There are many new varieties being released and unlike many other fruits some of the older blueberry varieties are still the most productive, versatile, and hardy. Southwest Michigan is the number one producer of cultivated blueberries and more than 90% of our production is grown from only six varieties. We recommend you visit a blueberry farm in your area to see what varieties work well for them. Chances are good they will be growing varieties we offer!