

Horticulture Hints

February 2010

Blueberries at Blueville (in a blue pot!)



The last few years seems to have brought a lot of interest in blueberries. With all the information out on the great nutritional value they offer, and their high cost at the grocery store, people are trying to grow their own.

Blueberries contain the highest antioxidant of any fruit, which is supposed to aid in the fight against cancer. The anthocyanins flavoids (which give them their blue color) have shown to actually help protect against memory loss.

With all these positive qualities, who wouldn't want to sprinkle a few blueberries on their cereal in the morning?

Blueberry bushes can be seen growing on the hillsides of North Britain and Northern Europe. They are also indigenous to Asia.

In North America, the shrubs grow best in the acidic soil found in Maine, New Jersey, Michigan, and North Carolina.

However, they require a much more acidic soil than the Midwest offers, making blueberries difficult to grow in Manhattan, Kansas.

Blueberry bushes require the soil ph to be between 4.8 - 5.2. Soils in our area typically have a ph between 6.0 - 6.5.

To prepare your area, take a soil test in the spot you wish to plant, and determine what amendments need to be applied to reach the desired ph.

To ammend most local soils, you will need to add two cubic feet of peat moss per 100 ft. and 1.5 to two pounds of sulfur per 100 sq. ft.

Do not use aluminum sulfate to correct the ph, as it is toxic to blueberries.

At the Garden Store, we carry peat moss by the cubic foot and pelletized sulfur, which is easy to apply with a spreader.

Plant blueberries in a sunny spot, although they can tolerate a little shade. They prefer an evenly moist soil with good drainage.

The plants cannot dry out, so make sure you can apply adequate water and keep them heavily mulched.

Blueberries require at least 3 inches of mulch. Saw dust is traditionally used, but shredded bark mulch will be fine.

Plant your blueberries about five feet apart. To get the best fruit harvest possible, plant two different varieties for good pollination.

Recently customers have inquired about planting blueberries in containers. The foremost problem with this method is overwintering them. The container would have to be insulated or buried to insure survival; an exposed root system will kill the plant during our winter.

We will carry several varieties of blueberries this spring and all the amendments you will need. If you want to try and grow your own blueberries, we can get you started. ❁

Houseplants 50% off through February

- Brighten up your empty house with our fantastic selection of houseplants!
- Start with a few small plants displayed in a group, or go all out with a large specimen plant and decorative pot.
- Find specialty soils for repotting, or bring in your existing plants for us to repot.
- Don't forget the water! We have a selection of watering cans and water bulbs.
- We also have a great variety of houseplant fertilizers, insecticides, cleaners and other accessories.



Nancy's Notebook

Can we grow yet?

This month, you might be getting anxious about growing something, and you can actually start a few things inside to get an early jump on your garden.

When should you start your seeds? It really depends on what you are growing, and the seed package usually tells the optimum time to start inside.

Some of the cole crops could be started now, since they prefer the cooler weather in early spring.

For flowers, pansies and petunias can take the cooler temperatures. Just be sure to read the seed packet for the germination times.

A good potting soil or a seed-starting mix is best for seed germination; using topsoil can introduce disease problems and can form a hard crust making it difficult for seeds to sprout.

Starting seeds doesn't require light, but rather heat, and a heating mat would be ideal. If you don't have a mat available, the top of the refrigerator is a good substitute. Place a dome or plastic wrap over your flat after watering to

trap in moisture and heat. Once the seeds have sprouted, remove the plastic and set the flat under a grow light or in a sunny window.

Do not plant your new sprouts outside without hardening them off first. This applies to house plants you take out for the summer, as well. Plants grown in the house do not take kindly to the fluctuation in temperatures and the air currents they find outdoors.

It's best to get them acclimated to it gradually. Some people take them out a little longer every day starting with an hour the first day and extending their exposure gradually until they are acclimated.

I know it's very tempting to purchase a packet of every new seed variety you see, but if this is your first try at seed starting it might be better to start small. Remember, the great thing about gardening is that there is always next year.

We have all the heating mats, soil and flats with domes that you require for starting your seed inside. All of our seed racks and bulk seeds have arrived as well. We look forward to seeing you at the Manhattan Area Garden Show February 27th and 28th at CiCo Park. ❁

SPRING OPEN HOUSE

Friday & Saturday, March 12 & 13

Great deals throughout the store!

We will have a live remote
with Q103.5 from 10-noon Saturday!

Check out our new pellet-wood grills
during a free lunch on Saturday.

