Blueberry plants are produced by several propagators in Oregon. Plants can be propagated readily with modern propagating equipment. It takes one to two years to grow a plant suitable for field planting.

In planting blueberries it is best to give 6 to 8 feet as a minimum distance between plants in the row and 8 to 10 feet between rows. These spacings are subject to adjustment if mechanical harvest is planned. Close planting creates a jungle at ripening time and makes picking very difficult. Most varieties spread their stems as the fruit weighs them down, and this should be considered when setting out plants.

Early spring is the best time to set out plants. Set them with the top of the root clump even with the soil surface and mulch lightly. Water in thoroughly and keep well watered during the summer months.

Fertilization of blueberries is quite important. However, blueberries planted in organic soils need little fertilization. A complete fertilizer should be used about every third year, if needed. Other than organic soils will need fairly heavy nitrogen fertilization. Ammonium sulfate at the rate of 1 pound per plant in the early spring is very beneficial. Application can be divided using half before blooming and half after berries set. This generally corresponds to mid-March and mid-May. The fertilizer should be spread to cover the root zone of the plant. Keep it away from the crown and spread out as far as the limbs reach.

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The blueberry can be harvested mechanically, and commercial harvesters are available for operations where hand picking is not feasible. Harvest normally extends from July 1 to September 1. Most varieties will be picked in two to four pickings. Yields up to 10 tons per acre have been achieved on 12-year-old plantings in the mid-Willamette Valley. This is exceptionally good but indicative of the productive potential of the blueberry. Blueberry fruit keeps well if kept cool. Fruit is sold for processing and fresh market. Marketing opportunities should be studied before establishing plantings.

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Revised by Lloyd Martin, Extension horticulture specialist, and Ralph Garren, Jr., associate professor of horticulture, Oregon State University.
High bush blueberries were introduced to Oregon more than 40 years ago. The mild climate of western Oregon is quite favorable for good yields of high quality fruits. Suitable soils and locations for growing blueberries can be found in many of our western Oregon counties. Plants grown in this area have remained free of the more serious diseases and pests found in blueberry plantings in many eastern states.

Expansion of the blueberry industry has been rather slow when compared with other berry crops. This has been largely due to a lack of intensive and aggressive marketing efforts and firmly established competition from other berry crops.

The cost of individual plants is somewhat high in comparison to other berry crops. Cost per plant may range from 50 cents to $1.50 depending upon age and variety. At the minimum distance between plants (6 feet in the row and 8 feet between rows) 1,104 plants are required to plant one acre. At an 8 x 10 foot spacing, 545 plants would be required. Under favorable conditions at least five years are required before one can expect a profitable return on the investment and costs involved in establishing a commercial blueberry enterprise. This factor accounts in part for the slower expansion of this industry, but it is compensated for in the longevity of the blueberry plant. Once established and well cared for, blueberry plantings can remain productive for 30 years or more.

The following information is provided as a general guide for the establishment of a blueberry planting. However, because of expenses and other factors involved, it is recommended that persons contemplating planting blueberries as a commercial venture consult with their county Extension agent or other agricultural specialists before making any sizable investment.

Soils with high organic matter content have long been used for blueberries. It is now a well known fact that our better drained loam soils will also produce this crop. The one factor that cannot be overlooked is that the soil must be moderately acid. The best production comes from soils with a pH below 5.6.

### Some Good Blueberry Varieties in Order of Ripening

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VARIETY</th>
<th>BERRY SIZE</th>
<th>COLOR</th>
<th>DESSERT QUALITY</th>
<th>BUSH SHAPE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Earliblue</td>
<td>Large</td>
<td>Light</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Erect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collins</td>
<td>Large</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Spreading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blueray</td>
<td>Large</td>
<td>Light</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Erect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berkeley</td>
<td>Large</td>
<td>Light</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atlantic</td>
<td>Small</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Spreading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ivanhoe</td>
<td>Large</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Erect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bluecrop</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Light</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Erect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herbert</td>
<td>Large</td>
<td>Dark</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jersey</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Erect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coville</td>
<td>Large</td>
<td>Dark</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Erect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dixi</td>
<td>Large</td>
<td>Dark</td>
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</table>

Mulching is a common practice in blueberry culture. Sawdust is generally used, starting with a light mulch at planting time and increasing the depth and width as growth takes place. Producing plants should have about 6 inches of mulch covering the entire root area. This mulch will retard weed growth, protect roots from extremes of temperature, and help hold soil moisture. The main feeder roots are found quite near the surface and would be injured if cultivation were practiced. Where extensive use of mulch is planned, it is often advisable to follow the land and treat with weedicides prior to establishment of the planting and application of the mulch. Certain insecticides are also best applied at this time.

Irrigation is necessary for good blueberry production. Blueberries require about an inch of water per week during the summer and it seems best to apply this at two-week intervals in most cases.
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