



## Fact Sheet

# Blueberries & Gooseberries



Blueberries and Gooseberries are both delicious and easy to grow. Although not as widely grown as Strawberries or Raspberries they are worth considering as an addition to a productive garden.

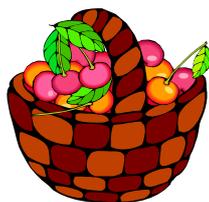
### **Blueberry - Vaccinium species**

Blueberries are native to North America. They are fast growing, generally deciduous shrubs producing fruit that is a good source of vitamin C. Fruit can be eaten fresh, cooked in a wide range of desserts, preserved frozen or made into jam. After 6 or 7 years, a well cared for Blueberry shrub should produce, approximately 5 kilos of fresh berries each season.

Blueberry plants thrive in areas that experience cool to cold winter temperatures and do best if planted in acidic, peaty soil. They are shallow rooted and therefore require ample moisture especially during summer. They need to be planted where they do not get the hot afternoon sun or hot drying winds. They benefit from being mulched and fertilised with plenty of well rotted manure and compost. It is also good practice not to overcrowd them. To maintain good air circulation plant bushes about 1.5m apart.

Blueberry plants do require pruning starting a couple of years after planting and continuing annually each winter. Fruit is produced on the previous years growth. Therefore, to encourage new shoots that will fruit the next season it is important to cut some (one to four), of the oldest stems either back hard to a strong new shoot, or if there is plenty of new growth from the ground, then cut down to soil level.

Blueberries are self-fertile, but they will produce greater amounts of fruit if at least two varieties are planted.



**To protect your berries from the voracious birds, ensure plants are covered with netting before the berries change colour.**

Varieties that we generally have in stock are:-



- Denise Blue** - a small spreading shrub that produces good yields of very large berries early in the season. Good for tubs.
- Nellie Kelly Blue** - a small bush to 1m that is evergreen. Red flowers in winter are followed by fruit in late spring & summer.
- Northland** - also a small spreading bush, reaching only about 1m in height. Producing good yields of small berries that are ideal for muffins. Early season and good tub specimen.
- Brigitta** - a larger growing shrub, reaching approximately 2m, producing good crops mid season from January to February.
- Blue Crop** - a moderately vigorous shrub and producing good quantities of very large fruit that is firm and has good flavour. Mid season.



Berries should be picked about 6 days after they have turned blue and they will come away easily from the stem when completely ripe.

Even if not grown for their fruit, Blueberry plants display attractive autumn foliage and pretty white flowers in late spring.

Blueberry plants don't experience any major problems except birds (covering fruit laden plants with netting is a good idea).

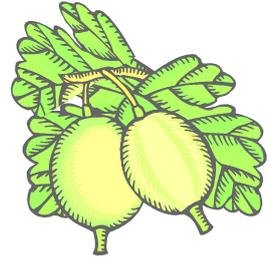
Occasionally light brown apple moth caterpillars may cause problems, in which case it may be necessary to spray with 'Dipel' or 'Carbaryl'. The other main problem, especially if good air circulation is not encouraged, can be Grey Mould, which can affect ripe berries, especially in humid weather. There is little that can be done for this, other than removing affected plant material.



**Tip for cooking with Blueberries -  
Use frozen berries instead of fresh if you  
wish the berries to keep their shape.**

## **Gooseberry - Ribes uva-crispa. Syn grossularia**

Like Blueberries, Gooseberry plants also perform well in cool climates. They are native to Europe and North America and are deciduous and frost hardy plants. Gooseberries do best when planted in rich, well drained, acidic soil that is well mulched. Grow in sun or part shade and water well during summer.



They are attractive upright shrubs that produce pinkish green flowers that are followed by the edible greenish fruit in late spring early summer. The fruit should be picked when it is soft, if eating fresh, or if used for cooking, then it should be picked while still firm.

Gooseberries also benefit from pruning. It is beneficial to aim to keep the centre of the bush open. Fruit is produced on new wood and on spurs of older wood.

When planting it is good practice to remove all but 3 or 4 strong shoots and to cut those remaining back by 3/4. The following winter overcrowded shoots should be removed and in general the plant should be pruned back by half.

Established Gooseberries should have their main stems pruned back by half of their new growth, weak growth removed completely and strong shoots shortened to about 8 or 10cm.

The main variety that we stock is 'Captivator' which is a thorn less and mildew resistant variety.

Occasionally we also stock 'Roaring Lion' which produces berries that turn red when fully mature, but can be susceptible to mildew.



Tip for making the soil acidic –

Mulch the area with rhubarb leaves after you have harvested your rhubarb.