

# THE YEAR-ROUND POTAGER

# GROWING A BLUEBERRY BUSH

Try cultivating blueberries from a specimen you have planted and cared for yourself

**B**lueberries are high in antioxidants and a popular fruit to grow, as not only are the yields attractive but the plant itself is too, whether during summer or autumn. They are a good fruit crop for a beginner as they are simple to care for, although to achieve larger yield production try having two or three cultivars for cross-pollination to occur. Follow this guide to learn how to plant and care for a blueberry bush so it produces colourful and delicious harvests.



1 Start by choosing a colourful pot which is suitable for your garden. Then place broken clay pieces into the base of your container to aid drainage and reduce compost washing out, or clogging drainage holes.



2 Depending on how old your plant is use a pot with a diameter of 30cm for young specimens or 45-50cm for older, larger ones. Begin to ease your crop gently out of its original pot, making sure not to damage the roots.

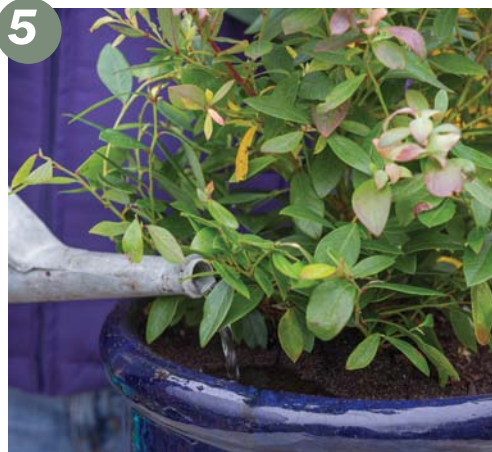


3 Position the blueberry bush in the middle of the container you are transplanting it into. Some compost can be added to the bottom of the pot if needed, for example if it is too deep for the blueberry bush you have acquired.



4 Fill around the plant with good quality soil, making sure there is enough to help support it while it develops. Be sure to use an ericaceous compost as these berries prefer acidic conditions.

Photography by GAP Photos.



**5** Water blueberry bushes with rainwater where possible – try using a waterbutt to easily collect this important resource. However, be careful not to waterlog the compost, instead make sure that it is evenly moist.



**6** Place your potted up plant in a sunny area of your garden and watch it develop and flower. Although they can grow in shade they prefer sunny conditions. It is also important to make sure the crops are in a sheltered position.



**7** If your plant is appropriately cared for, flowers of a bell-like shape will begin to appear during spring. These blossoms are a delightful sight and mean blueberry bushes are a productive crop and an ornamental feature, too.



**8** Once planted you can feed your blueberry bush with a liquid fertiliser to aid development, but make sure it is suited to ericaceous varieties! The feed can be applied monthly and remember to read the instructions.



**9** As fruits ripen they turn from green to the characteristic dusky blue of this berry, but they don't all change at the same time. Ready to pick from the middle of summer enjoy watching these fruit mature.



**10** Harvest the berries when completely coloured and leave those which are unripened to mature. Mouthwatering if eaten fresh, they can also be used in a variety of kitchen dishes, from blueberry pie to muffins and jam.

## GYO'S TOP TIPS



## WHAT TO DO NEXT

**Pruning** is usually only needed once the plant is over two years old, but after this it should be carried out regularly so that your specimen continues to be productive and provide you with a bountiful berry harvest. Pruning can be conducted from late autumn until early spring. Remove any growth that appears diseased, damaged or dead, along with twigs that produced fruit the previous year, although no more than 25 per cent of thick base foliage from older plants.

**Pests and diseases** could affect your blueberry crop but there are a few ways to help reduce likelihood of problems. Aphids could be a issue – surrounding shoot tips as well as leaves. These pests will increase the likelihood of dark sooty mould growth on your crop, as they excrete honeydew. If found in the middle of summer they will likely be controlled naturally by predators such as ladybirds.

## READER OFFER

It is now time to think about autumn planting to get ready for the new season, with this in mind, Charella Gardens are pleased to offer all *Grow Your Own* readers a 10 per cent discount on all blueberries purchased in the month of October 2017. Take a look at the selection, along with care and maintenance guides at [charellagardens.co.uk](http://charellagardens.co.uk) and enter discount code **GROWYOUROWNBERRY** at checkout.