

# Growing Blueberries In the Foothills



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# Why Blueberries?

- Hardy: cold/water
- Attractive landscape plant
- Less invasive (raspberries/blackberries)
- More “travel-hearty” (raspberries/blackberries)
- Disease/Pest Resistant
- Less Pruning (compared to raspberries/blackberries)
- No thorns



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# Disadvantages

- Slow growing (strip flowers in early years)
- Small crops in early years
- Need to protect from birds
- Shallow Roots (need more frequent water)
- Soil Amendment
  - Acid
  - Organic
  - Most Peninsula Soils are Alkaline/clay



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# Varieties

- Season (early/late)
- Berry Size
- Sugar content
- Clustered berries
- Berry Size (eating v. baking)
- Plant a variety to see which does best in your microclimate
- Consult local nurseries & fellow gardeners in your neighborhood
- MG Demonstration Gardens



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# Varieties cont...

## Early Varieties

- Duke
- Earliblue
- O'Neal
- Bluetta
- Patriot
- Georgia Gem
- Reveille
- Emerald
- Misty
- Sharpblue

## Mid Season Varieties

- Bluecrop
- Berkeley
- Blueray
- Legacy
- Sunshine Blue
- Top Hat
- Southmoon

## Late Season Varieties

- Ozark Blue
- Liberty
- Jersey
- Elliott
- Jewell
- Toro



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# Varieties cont...

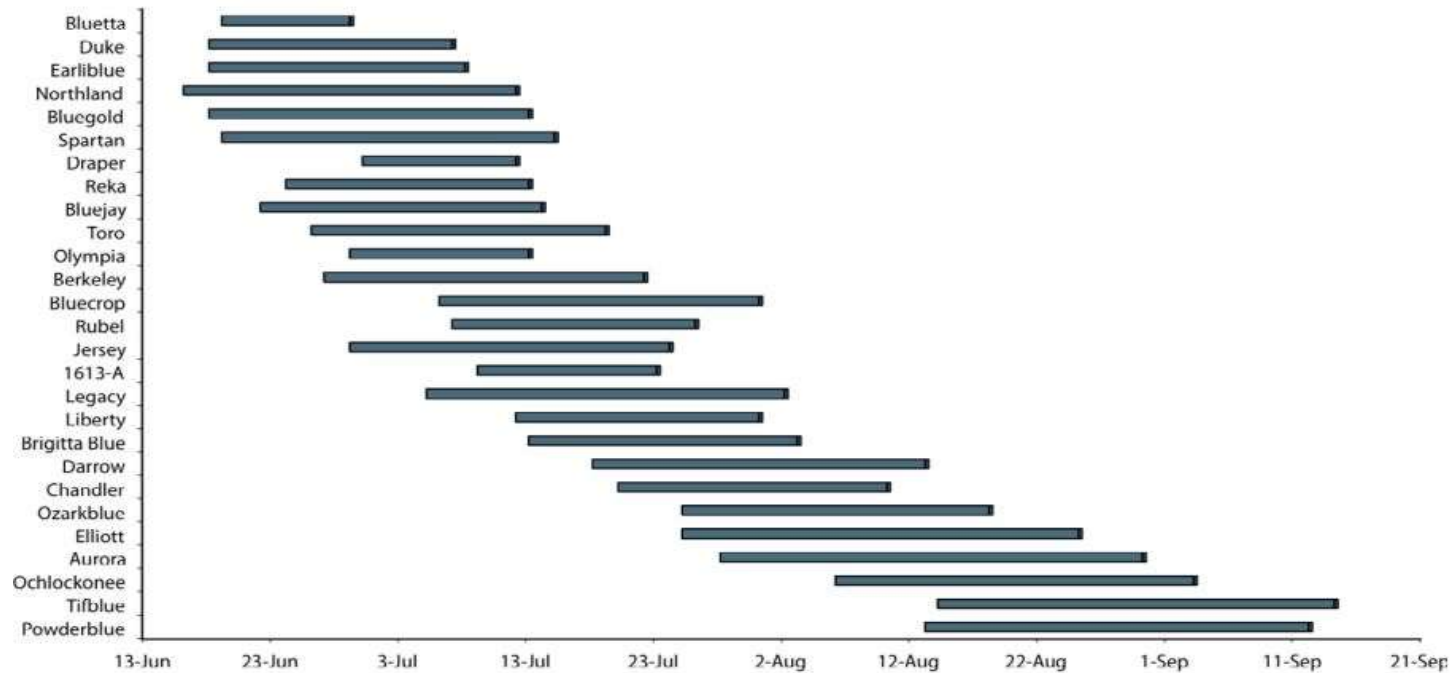


Figure 1. Approximate fruiting season of highbush and rabbiteye blueberry cultivars at the OSU North Willamette Research and Extension Center, Aurora, OR. Bars represent harvest season for 5% to 95% of total yield. Cultivars are sorted by the date at which 50% percent of total yield has been harvested. Ripening time can vary with year (weather) and cultural practices.

Slide Credit: Pacific Northwest Extension



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# Fertilizer

- Use no nitrates (Urea or ammonium)
- “Acid Loving Plant” Fertilizer
- Do not over-fertilize
- Alfalfa pellets (slower release)



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# Soil Amendment

- Drainage
  - Cocoa Coir (a.k.a “beats-peat”)
- Soil Acidification
  - Sulfur
- Raised Beds/Rows



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# Bird Exclusion

- Bird Intelligence
- Poles/Tennis Balls
- Built cages
- Landscape Staples
  - Keep nets off plants
  - Cover Completely
  - Woven, non-woven
  - Clothespins
- Walk-in



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# Bird Exclusion cont...

- Keep nets off plants
- Use caution if wearing buttons
- Nets drape ground or stapled
- **Gently** disentangle plants, if necessary
- U/T Stakes
- Rebar
- Lash Bamboo
- PVC Hoops



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# Potting Issues

- Water, Water, Water
- Bubbles
- Comes out Holes
- Bottom Wettest
- Mulch (retain moisture, keep soil cool)
- Dry Pots are Difficult to re-wet



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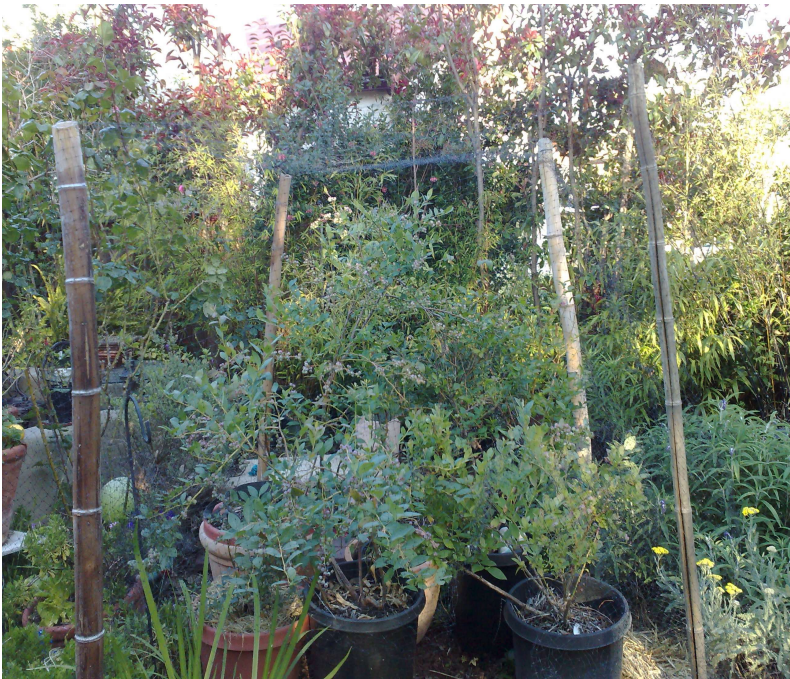
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# Landscape

- Color
- Netting



[bettyhallphotography.com](http://bettyhallphotography.com)



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# Potting Issues

The height of the saturated zone  
in a container  
depends on the particle size  
of the potting mix



Slide Credit: Dr. Richard Evans, UCD Plant Science

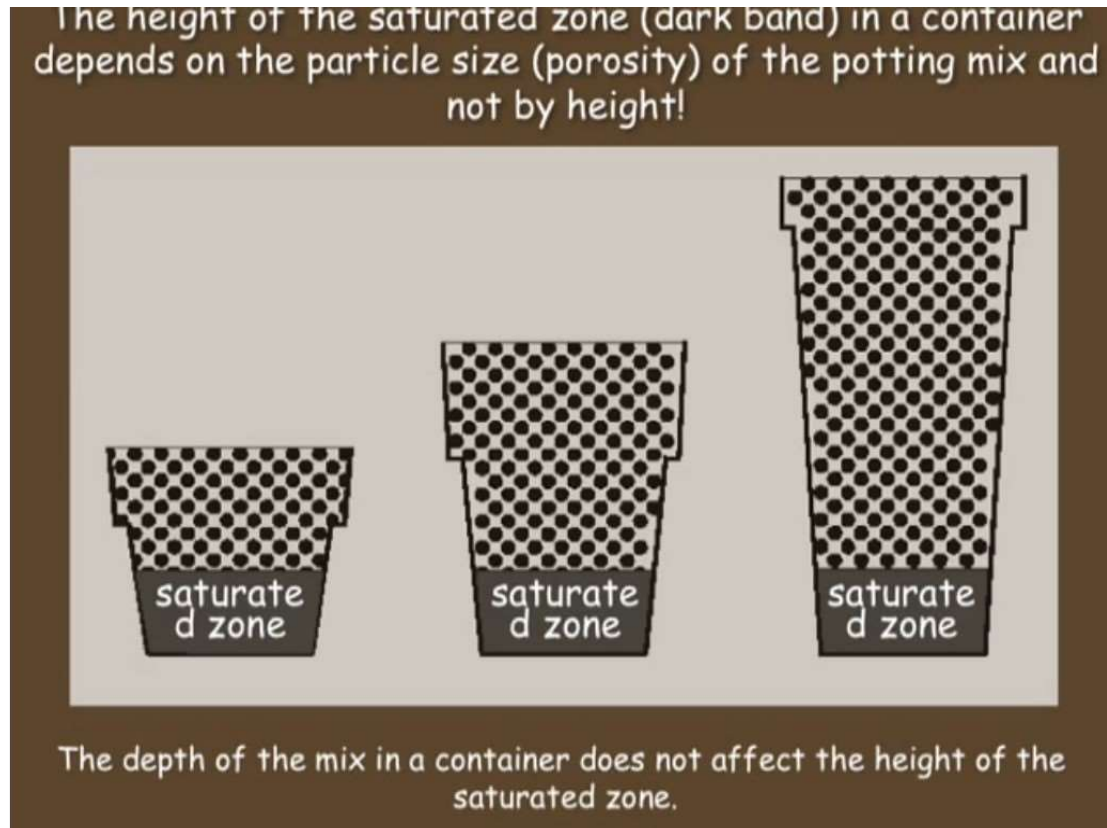


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# Potting Issues



Slide Credit: Dr. Richard Evans, UCD Plant Science

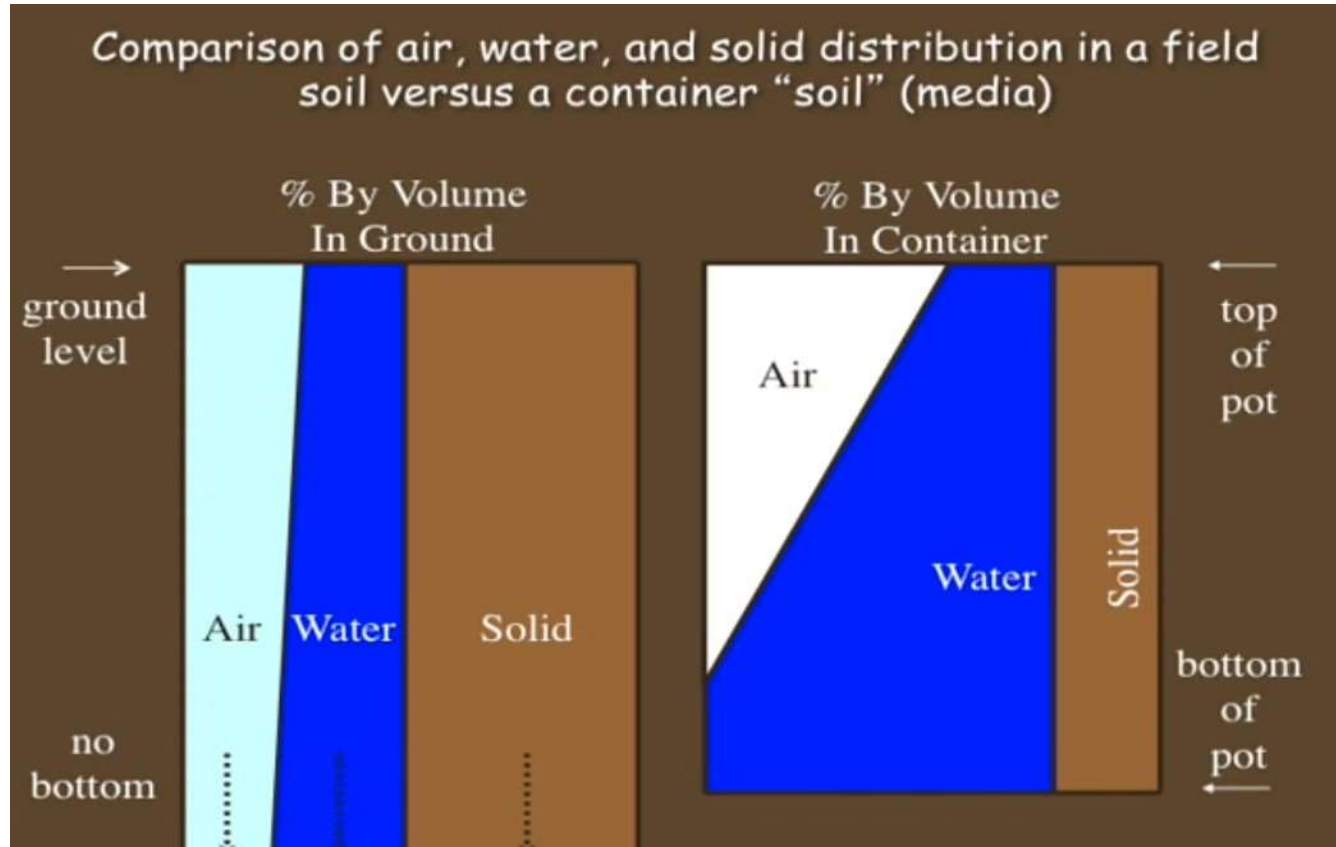


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# Potting Issues



Slide Credit: Dr. Richard Evans, UCD Plant Science



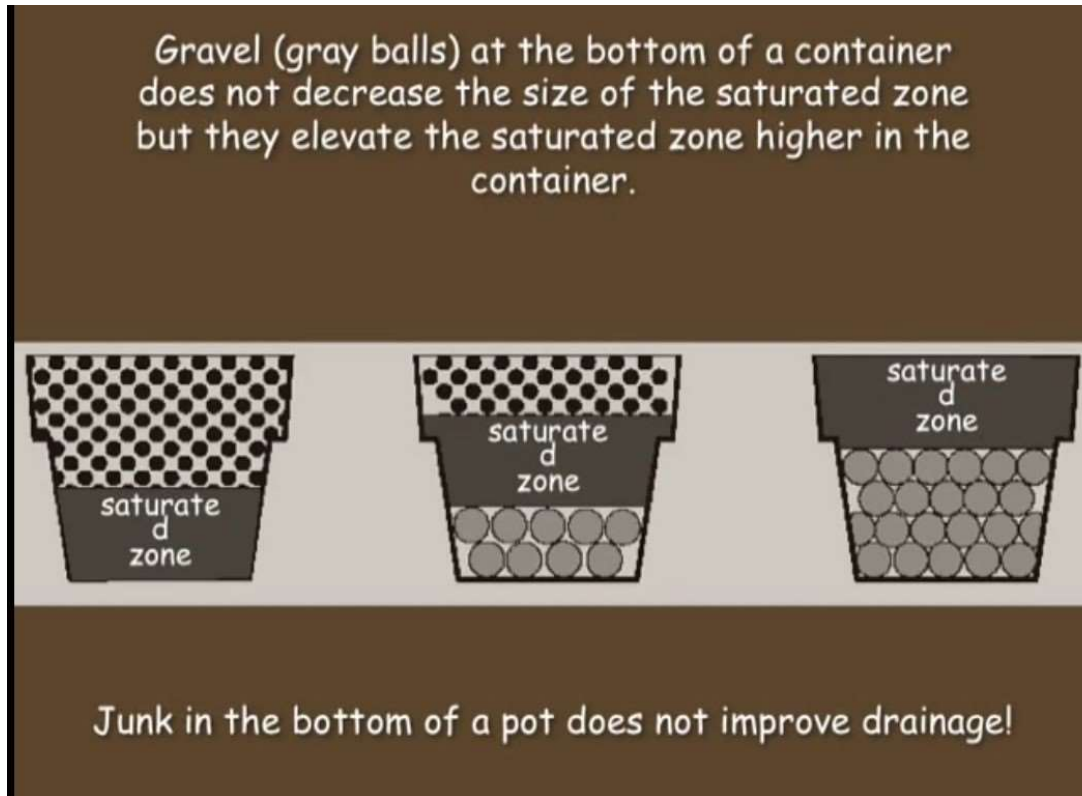
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# Potting Issues



Slide Credit: Dr. Richard Evans, UCD Plant Science



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# Potting Mixes

## UCD Arboretum Mix (Low Organic Content)

- 1 part ground peat ( Coir is a sustainable substitute)
- 1 part coarse uniform sand (no silt)
- 2.5 part pumice or lava fines
- 1 part redwood compost

## Commercial Mixes

- Too Much Organic Material (breaks down quickly)
- Organic Breakdown decreases porosity
- More useful for “quick-turnaround planting”

Slide Credit: Dr. Richard Evans, UCD Plant Science



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# Planting in the Ground

- Dig hole approximately 2.5 feet in the diameter and one-foot deep.
- Remove one-third to one-half of the soil.
- Add an equal amount of pre-moistened peat moss/coir/oak leaf mold, two cups of soil sulfur, 2 tablespoons of phosphate fertilizer, and mix well. ( one 4-cubic foot compressed bale will usually be sufficient for 4 to 5 plants.)
- For raised beds, mix equal volumes peat moss with acid compost or planting mix.
- Blueberries thrive in acidic soils that have a pH of 5 – 6. The pH of soils in much of Santa Clara County are between 7.0 – 7.6.

Established blueberry plants in San Jose that are 14 years old as of 2003 have done beautifully with no ongoing acidic fertilization since the year they were planted; just mulched.

Slide Credit: Santa Clara Master Gardeners Field Trial, 1997



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# References

## University Websites



Oregon State



Penn State



NC State



Univ. of Georgia



Cornell Univ.



Michigan State



Univ. of Minnesota



## References cont...

### Nurseries

Fall Creek Nursery: Varieties



Blueberry Patch Nursery, OH



Backyard Berry Plant Nursery



Santa Barbara Blueberries



Fall Creek Nursery: Growing Blueberries



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## References cont...

### Other

1997 MG Blueberry Trial

CA Blueberry Commission



Soil pH for Blueberries



Acidifying Soil for Blueberries



USDA



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# Got Questions? Ask a Master Gardener!

***Call our helpline at:*** (530) 273-0919

***Email questions along with an attached photo to:*** [\\_mgnevada@ucanr.edu](mailto:mgnevada@ucanr.edu)

***Visit us in two locations from 9am-4pm (samples should be in a sealed container):***

***Map and Directions:*** <https://ucanr.edu/site/uc-master-gardeners-nevada-county>

***Visit*** our website at: <http://smsf-mastergardeners.ucanr.org>



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