

How Walker Farm Deals with the Blues

Blueberry Varieties:

Early – Duke, Patriot, Blueray, Earli-blue

Mid – Bluecrop, Berkeley, Bluegold

Late – Chandler, Darrow, Jersey

Very Late - Elliot

*Plant at least 2 different varieties for best pollination.

Soil:

Choose a well-drained soil that holds moisture. PH of soil is probably the most important factor. PH must be under 5 preferably 4.5 to 4.8. Lower soil PH with applications of sulfur.

Planting:

Dig a hole 1' x 1' x 1', mix soil & peat moss at ratio of 30% peat to 70% soil. Place mix around each plant and top off planting hole with straight loam. Make sure peat moss is saturated with water. Plant should be at same depth that it was at the nursery. Do not let roots dry out during planting. Plants should be 4-5' apart in rows 8-10' apart. Do not fertilize bushes at planting.

Fertilization

Do not overfertilize the plants as it can burn the roots. Wait 6-8 weeks after planting and band plants with organic fertilizer or ammonium sulfate. In subsequent years fertilize lightly at bloom time and again one month later in a circular band around each plant. Do not apply fertilizer in late summer or early fall as new growth could sustain winter injury and lead to disease problems.

Weed Control:

Blueberries are shallow rooted and should have 1-2" of water per week. Mulch with wood chips to control weed growth.

Pruning:

Remove flowers the first year, do not let berries develop. For first 3 years no pruning is needed. Prune 4th year plants while in dormant stage. Remove lower weak branches and branches less than 6' long. Old and heavy mature branches in center should be removed to allow air and sunlight to penetrate. Goal is to have 12 canes of mixed age per plant. New wood produces largest fruit.

Berry Good Facts

To grow all berries organically, keep ripe fruit picked out and toss older fruit into the compost pile. Keep plants thinned enough to allow good air movement that will reduce disease.

Earlier strawberries can be harvested using spun-bond (Remay) applied as the mulch in late fall. Compost berries, spread straw between rows and cover a portion of the berries with the cloth. Hold down edges of cloth with sand bags or rocks.

Berry Plant Sources:

Walker Farm

Phone: 802.254.2051

Website: www.walkerfarm.com

Nourse Farm (for larger quantities and more varieties) – Whately, Mass.

Phone: 413.665.2658

Website: www.noursefarms.com

Jersey Asparagus Farms

Phone: 856.358.2548

Website: www.jerseyasparagus.com

Recommended Fertilizer: ProGrow Organic 5-3-4 from North Country Organics, Bradford, VT website: www.norganics.com (available at Walker Farm)

Happy Berry Growing

Raspberry Delights

Raspberry Varieties:

Summer:

Early – Boyne, Prelude

Mid – Killarney, Lauren, Latham, Encore

Late – Taylor

Fall:

Autumn Britten, Polana, Caroline, Heritage

Soil

Raspberries should have full sunlight and sandy loam soils with good drainage. Work in compost before planting and shoot for a PH between 5.8 and 6.5.

Planting

Plants are ready to go into the ground as early as spring permits, frost will not harm them. Space 3' apart in the row and 10' between rows. Planting depth should be 1-2" inches lower than the nursery soil line. Dig a good sized hole to space roots, fill firmly with soil and apply water if soil is dry.

Fertilization

Apply one pound of Pro Grow 5-3-4 organic fertilizer or 10-10-10 fertilizer per 100 feet of row 10 days and 40 days after planting. In following years apply 2-3 pounds of fertilizer per 100 feet of row in spring before growth starts and again in May. A good application of compost can be substituted for fertilizer.

Weed Control

Be careful with mechanical weed control as raspberry roots are shallow. Straw mulch the first year helps cut down on weed competition but mulching is not recommended in following years as it promotes some diseases.

Pruning

Pruning has a major impact on the production of quality raspberry fruit. It will affect growth rate, fruit number, size and disease susceptibility.

Summer types – Prune the canes that produced the berries immediately after the harvest season is complete. Of the remaining canes, thin the weaker ones out leaving 5-6 of the strongest per foot of row.

Fall types – Mow off all canes in very late fall or early spring. Trim the canes as close to the ground as possible leaving minimal stubble. The new canes that emerge will yield fruit in the early fall.

Strawberry Alarm Clock

Strawberry Varieties:

Early – Wendy, Annapolis

Mid – Cavendish, Jewel

Late – Cabot, Sparkle

Ever-bearing or Day Neutral – Seascape

Soil:

Strawberries like a well-drained soil high in organic matter and a PH of 6.5-6.8. They need full sun for highest yields, at least 6 hours per day. Ideally plants should receive about 1” of water per week.

Planting:

Set plants in composted and tilled rows with roots straight down. The middle of the strawberry’s crown should be level with the top of the soil so that when soil settles the soil line will be even with the bottom of the crown. Since runners will come out from the crowns, avoid covering them with soil when you weed. Set plants 24 – 30” apart in rows 3 to 4’ apart. Strawberries should get 1-2” of rainfall per week.

Be sure to pick off blossoms the first summer to maintain plant vigor.

Root runners through the season by tucking them in the soil in an even pattern around the mother plant. Use a small stone to hold down the leaf end of the runner to make soil contact. Keep rows less than 2’ wide to maximize light and increase size and yield.

Thin excess runners to avoid overcrowding.

Weed Control:

Keep beds weed free so plants won’t have to compete for water and nourishment. Straw used for overwintering can smother weeds and keep soil cool and moist.

Mulching:

For winter protection of the crowns cover plants with 3-4 inches of straw after several hard frosts usually in early to mid-November. Well aged compost applied before mulching in late fall after growth has stopped will increase yields and quality of berries.

Day Neutrals:

Set out on mulch or plastic same time as regular strawberries. Pinch off blossoms for 6 weeks. Runners can be removed to allow plants to become larger. Plants will set fruit from midsummer through October and again the following spring.