



Blueberries

Interesting Facts

BC is one of the top three blueberry producing regions in the world. In the last 10 to 15 years, per capita consumption of blueberries has doubled. In North America, average consumption each year is about 400 grams.

What are blueberries?

Blueberries are small, round, dark blue berries. A berry is a small juicy fruit with many tiny seeds.

Where are blueberries produced in BC?

Ninety-nine per cent of BC blueberries are grown in the Fraser Valley, Richmond, Pitt Meadows, Matsqui Prairie and Surrey.

How many blueberries do we produce?

BC produces at least 95% of the Canadian production of cultivated blueberries—about 24 million kilograms per year. About 50% of these are frozen and made into value-added products such as jams. The rest are bought fresh for export or local consumption through stores and farm gate outlets. In BC, over 8,400 hectares are farmed by over 1340 farm families.

How are blueberries produced?

Blueberries require an acidic soil, as well as proper drainage and balanced nutrients. Once grown only in peat (drained bogs) now blueberry bushes are also cultivated in mineral soil.

A blueberry plant is started from a plant cutting planted in rooting media. The plant grows its first year protected in a greenhouse. The second year the bush is planted in rows in a field and a sawdust

mulch is often placed around the plants. The main advantage of mulching is to regulate the soil temperature. Blueberries have very shallow roots and can be affected by high or low soil temperatures. A mulch also keeps the soil moist and controls weeds. Plants must be pruned each year for good berry production. Pollination is important. Farmers bring in beehives during flowering season to ensure good pollination. A blueberry plant can grow up to 2.5m high.

In Richmond BC, some blueberry plants are over 50 years old.

Blueberries are usually harvested 2 to 4 times

between July and September. Berries for the fresh market are hand picked from the bush. Berries for the processed market are increasingly harvested using mechanical harvesters. More growers are changing to mechanical harvesting because of the increasing cost of labour relative to the price of blueberries.

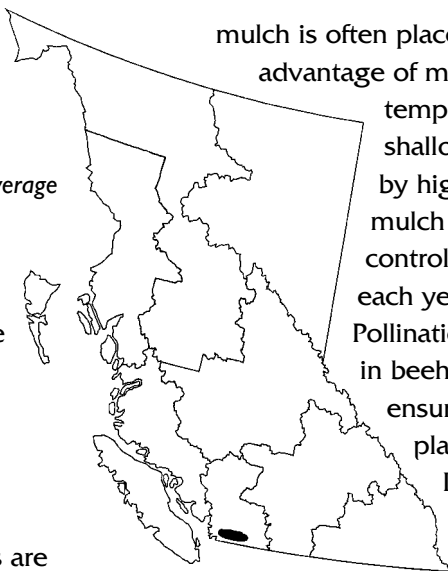
Blueberry plants are deciduous and lose their leaves in the fall. Fall leaf colour ranges from yellow to crimson to dark red.

How are blueberries used?

Blueberries can be eaten fresh, dried or processed into pie filling, jam, jelly or syrup. They are also frozen and made into candies, baked goods, muffin mixes, purées and more.

What happens after the blueberries leave the farm?

After harvest, the berries are either sold fresh or sent to a processor or packer. There are about



10 major processors and packers in BC as well as a number of smaller packers. Blueberries are distributed to wholesalers who export BC blueberries throughout the world including the United States, Europe, Japan and Australia.

What challenges do blueberry producers face?

Blueberry production is increasing worldwide. BC's blueberry industry must encourage increased consumption of blueberries.

Blueberry farmers face increasing costs in producing their crops. This means farmers must find ways of reducing their costs so that they can remain competitive with other blueberry-producing regions. Reducing costs include the use of mechanical harvesters and effective methods of crop protection.

Birds are a major challenge during the harvesting period. They can eat a large portion of the crop

if the field is not protected. Farmers use sound devices and control devices such as hawk kites and balloons to scare birds away from their crops.

Who's involved in producing blueberries?

- Blueberry growers
- Field workers for crop maintenance/picking
- Transporters/truckers
- Integrated Pest Management services
- Researchers
- Market/promotion workers
- Fertilizer and pesticide sales people
- Nursery workers and owners
- * Farm Equipment Dealers

Contacts and other resources:

BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands
BC Blueberry Council



Nutritional Facts

Serving Size: 1 cup blueberries (140g)

Calories	25
Total Fat	0g
Saturated Fat	0g
Cholesterol	0mg
Sodium	0mg
Total Carbohydrate	5g
Dietary Fibre	3g
Sugars	2g
Protein	1g
Vitamin A	4%
Vitamin C	10%
Iron	2%
Calcium	4%
Calories from Fat	0
Daily Value*	
Total Fat	0%
Saturated Fat	0%
Cholesterol	0%
Sodium	0%
Total Carbohydrate	2%
Dietary Fibre	2%

*Per cent Daily Values are based on a 2,000-calorie diet.