

Small Fruits and Berries

Growing small fruits and berries can be a rewarding endeavor for gardeners of all skill levels. From the tantalizing sweetness of strawberries to the tangy burst of raspberries, these diminutive delights offer a plethora of flavors, colors, and textures to savor. Whether you have a sprawling backyard or a modest balcony, there are options for cultivating these fruits in spaces of all sizes.

One of the joys of growing small fruits and berries lies in their versatility. They can be grown in traditional garden beds, raised beds, containers, hanging baskets, or even espaliered against a wall for decorative purposes. This adaptability makes them ideal for urban gardeners or those with limited outdoor space.

In addition to the great tasty treats, tending to a garden can be a therapeutic and stress-relieving activity, providing a welcome respite from the hustle and bustle of daily life. Whether you are a seasoned gardener or a novice enthusiast, embarking on the journey of growing small fruits and berries promises a fruitful and fulfilling experience.

Choose the best varieties for your growing location

Not all fruits and berries grow well in all areas. There are varieties that are disease resistant to our area, as well as varieties that have a shorter harvest date. If you decide to plant Blueberries, Huckleberries, Cranberries, or Lingonberries in a container, use an acid soil with fine bark or peat moss mixed in.

Prepare soil properly before planting

Work in generous amounts of organic matter such as compost or composted manure. If you do not use composted manure, which already contains nitrogen, also work in a complete fertilizer.

Plant Properly

Small fruits and berries do best in well-draining soil and at least 6 - 8 hours of sun each day. Provide proper spacing between plants to aid in air flow and light penetration for better and uniform ripening. Keep in mind vining types of fruits and berries (Kiwis, Grapes, and Raspberries) may need some type of additional support.

Know your Pollination needs

Some varieties are self-fertile while others will require cross pollination to produce. Blueberries, for example, do best by having at least two different varieties to cross pollinate. Adding Mason bees to your garden also aids pollination and increases yields. Some small fruits, like Kiwi require both a female and male plant.

Water Consistently

Maintain even soil moisture so plants do not dry out, but do not over-water. Water deeply, then give the soil time to dry partially before watering again. Inconsistent watering will reduce fruit and berry yields and negatively affect flavor.

Fertilize regularly

Most fruits and berries should be fed with nitrogen fertilizer at least every 4 to 6 weeks. However, be careful not to over-fertilize, which can cause some fruits and berries to produce less.

Mulch

A 2 – 3 inch layer of organic matter applied over the roots of your plants will cool the soil, reduce weeds, and help prevent soil moisture fluctuations ruining quality. Strawberries prefer to be mulched with pine shavings. These are easily found at a local feed or pet store.

Eliminate Weeds

Weeds compete with your fruits and berries for water, nutrients, and sunlight. This reduces yields. Pull weeds by hand and cultivate the soil frequently to keep them to a minimum.

Harvest Often

Many fruits and berries produce best when you pick them a couple times each week. The exception are blueberries. They will get up to 20% larger and juicier if left for several days to ripen.

Control Insects

Many insects enjoy fresh fruits and berries vegetables as much as you do. Always keep an eye open for insect damage and take necessary steps to protect your plants.

Critters

Rabbits, deer, racoons, birds, and other critters love to feast on fruits and berries. Protect your plants from unwanted harvesters by fencing your areas or using small bits of soap.

Berries

Unlike traditional fruit trees (apples, pears, etc.), berries can be grown in smaller spaces and harvesting your backyard fruit crop is much sooner than fruit trees.

Blackberries	Gooseberries	Raspberries
Blueberries	Goumi berries	Strawberries
Boysenberries	Honeyberries	Tayberries
Chokeberry (Aronia)	Josta Berries	
Elderberries	Loganberries	
Goji Berries	Marionberries	

Small Fruits

These small fruits are other types of fruiting plants that do not fall into a typical “berry” category.

Currants	Kiwi – Fuzzy
Figs	Kiwi – Hardy (Smooth)
Grapes (seeded, seedless)	Pomegranate

Specialty Fruits

Here are some options if you are looking to grow something more unique than basic blueberries and strawberries. These varieties tend to be harder to find in the local garden center but are still great in the kitchen.

Autumn Olive	Loquat	Paw Paw
Cornelian Cherry (Cornus mas)	Medlar	Persimmons
Hops	Mulberries	Quince
Jujube	Olives	Seaberries

Non-Hardy Fruits

These are great for outdoor patios when the weather is warmer during summer months. Bring them inside during the colder winter months.

Kumquats	Mandarins
Lemons	Oranges
Limes	Tangelos

Native Berries

These are great options for wildlife growing / gardening.

Cranberries	Salmonberries
Huckleberries	Saskatoons
Lingonberries	Thimbleberries