



# Columbia Nursery

## Planting & Caring for Berries in Northwest Montana (Zones 3–5)

### 1. Choose Cold-Hardy, Zone-Appropriate Varieties

Select berries rated for Zone 3–5 hardiness. Good choices include:

- Raspberries: Boyne, Latham, Heritage
- Haskaps (Honeyberries): Aurora, Tundra, Borealis, Cinderella (select compatible pollinators)
- Blueberries: Northblue, Northcountry, Polaris (lowbush or half-high types)
- Strawberries: Honeoye, Sparkle, Seascape

### 2. Plant in Well-Drained Soil with Plenty of Sun

Berries need 6+ hours of full sun daily for best fruiting. Improve heavy clay or rocky soils with compost. (G&B Soil Conditioner for clay soil). Blueberries require acidic soil (pH 4.5–5.5), while other berries prefer pH 6.0–6.8. Use Espoma Soil Acidifier when necessary.

### 3. Water Consistently, Especially During Establishment and Fruiting

Keep soil consistently moist but not soggy. Most berries need 1–1.5 inches of water per week, especially during fruiting. Use drip irrigation or soaker hoses to minimize disease from wet leaves.

### 4. Mulch to Conserve Moisture and Suppress Weeds

Apply 2–4 inches of organic mulch (straw, bark, pine needles). Mulch keeps soil cool, retains water, and protects shallow roots. Replenish mulch annually, especially before winter.

### 5. Fertilize Lightly and at the Right Time

Use a balanced or berry-specific fertilizer in early spring. (Espoma Blueberries prefer ammonium sulfate and should avoid high-nitrogen feeds. Stop fertilizing by early August to avoid frost-sensitive new growth.

### 6. Prepare for Winter

Mulch heavily around plant bases in fall to insulate roots. Avoid fall pruning—leave canes and foliage to help trap snow and promote dormancy. Protect young or shallow-rooted plants like strawberries with straw or leaves.



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## Product Recommendations

Compost/Soil Amendments	Feed & Fertilize
G&B Soil Conditioner*	Espoma Berry Tone
Organic Poultry Compost*	Espoma Soil Acidifier (sulfur)
Compost & Manure	
Big Foot Mycorrhizae Concentrate (promotes vigorous root growth & establishment)	

\*Denotes safe for organic use.

Protect & Defend	Treats
BioAdvanced Fruit, Citrus & Vegetable Insect Control	Systemic insecticide, 1 x yearly
BioAdvanced Fruit & Vegetable 3-in-1 Solution	insects, mites, fungus - up to day before harvest
Bonide Captain Jack's Neem Max (insecticide)*	insects
Natria Neem Oil (insecticide)*	insects, powdery mildew

\*Denotes safe for organic use.