

Practical considerations for organic production of blueberries

- Establishment (yrs 1-3) can be a challenge due to weeds – start conventional then transition to organic?
- Avoid planting near old blueberry fields that may harbor disease and insect pests.
- Mulch – incorporated and on surface: peat moss, pine needles, pine bark, wood chips, sawdust
- Drip irrigation preferred – not overhead

Fertilization (N,P,K) and pH lowering (S) based on soil testing

- NITROGEN from “meals” (blood, fish, cotton seed) or from animal manures – usually composted to avoid human pathogens. High Ca, Na can be a problem – have it tested!!
(note: Cotton seed meal from non-organic cotton may be prohibited)
- PHOSPHORUS from bone meal, rock phosphate, broiler litter
- POTASSIUM from mined potassium sulfate, broiler litter
- SULFUR as needed to lower pH (~1 lb/100 sq ft)

Weed Control

- Cultivation, Hand weeding, hoeing
- Mulch and/or weed barrier fabrics – be creative!
- Organic “burn-down” materials (acids, including vinegar?)
- Flaming with propane burner (at night? Fire risk, operator risk)



Disease Control

- Drainage/site selection
- Avoidance/isolation
- Cultivar selection
- Resistance
- Proper plant health, avoid excessive fertility
- Sanitation/Pruning
- Clean planting stock
- Dormant sprays with lime-sulfur
- Timely, complete harvest
- Post-harvest cooling



Insect Control

- Avoidance/Isolation
- Resistant cultivars
- Bt for fruit worms (cranberry fruitworm, cherry fruitworm)
- Spinosad 'Entrust' for Blueberry maggot fly
- Plum curculio (shown) if present, hard to control organically



Organic Information:

- Blueberries: Organic Production. National Sustainable Agriculture Information Service --
<http://attra.ncat.org/attra-pub/PDF/blueberry.pdf>
- Organic Farm Certification & the National Organic Program --
<http://attra.ncat.org/attra-pub/PDF/organcert.pdf>
- Suggestions for Organic Blueberry Production in Georgia
<http://www.smallfruits.org/Blueberries/production/04organic.pdf>