



# Cultural Calendar for Commercial Blueberry Production

**Nicole Gauthier, Plant Pathology Extension Specialist; Kimberly Leonberger, Plant Pathology Extension Associate;  
Ric Bessin, Entomology Extension Specialist; Matt Springer, Wildlife Extension Specialist;  
Daniel Becker, Horticulture Extension Associate; and John Strang & Shawn Wright, Horticulture Extension Specialists**

Integrated pest management (IPM) includes the combination of biological, cultural, physical, and chemical tools in efforts to manage diseases and pests while minimizing risks associated with pesticides. Cultural practices are an integral part of an IPM program and should be incorporated into all commercial systems whether large or small, conventional or organic. This publication provides recommended practices at approximate growth stages and/or production periods. However, these timelines are approximate and may require adjustment for particular conditions. Growers who encounter situations that may not align with suggestions here should contact their county Extension office for assistance. Extension offices can also provide updated pest management recommendations. This cultural guide serves as a supplement to published spray guides and scouting guides.



PINK



BLOOM



PETAL FALL



HARVEST

GROWTH STAGE		Planting	Dormant	Petal fall	After bloom	Harvest	End of season
<b>Diseases</b>	<b>Cankers</b> (Phomopsis, Botryosphaeria)	Avoid mechanical damage when setting new plants; Maintain proper pH, fertility, and overall plant health.	Promote plant vigor, reduce plant stress, and avoid wounding; Prune and dispose of dead, dying, and diseased wood.			Irrigate as needed to prevent drought stress.	Prune and dispose of dead, dying, and diseased wood; Irrigate as needed to prevent drought stress; Mulch around plants; Avoid fertilizing late in season.
	<b>Fruit Rots</b>		Prune and dispose of dead, dying, and diseased wood.	Prune to improve air circulation, reduce canopy shading, and decrease relative humidity.	Remove and dispose of diseased berries; Avoid excessive nitrogen fertilizer.	Remove and dispose of diseased berries and fallen fruit.	Remove and dispose of fallen fruit.
	<b>Phomopsis Twig Blight</b>	Select resistant cultivars; Avoid mechanical damage when setting new plants; Maintain proper pH, fertility, and overall plant health.	Prune diseased stems; Remove weak canes; Avoid mechanical damage.	Prune diseased stems; Remove weak canes.		Irrigate as needed to prevent drought stress.	Mulch around plants; Irrigate as needed to prevent drought stress; Avoid fertilizing late in the season.
	<b>Phytophthora Root Rot</b>	Plant only healthy, disease-free plants; Provide adequate soil drainage; Plant in raised beds.					

GROWTH STAGE		Planting	Dormant	Petal fall	After bloom	Harvest	End of season
<b>Insects</b>	<b>Protect Pollinators</b>		Regularly remove or mow weeds in and around the field to reduce flowers that attract pollinators.	Regularly remove or mow weeds in and around the field to reduce flowers that attract pollinators.	Regularly remove or mow weeds in and around the field to reduce flowers that attract pollinators.	Regularly remove or mow weeds in and around the field to reduce flowers that attract pollinators.	
	<b>Spotted Wing Drosophila &amp; Fruit Flies</b>		Prune to improve air circulation, reduce relative humidity, and promote air flow.	Avoid excessive nitrogen fertilizer to prevent development of dense canopy growth.	Remove weeds around plants to eliminate habitat, improve light penetration, and to improve air flow.	Cover plants with fine netting to exclude insects; Gather and remove damaged fruit; Pick berries frequently and store immediately at a temperature below 40°F.	
<b>Weeds</b>	<b>Broadleaf &amp; Grass Weeds</b>	Plant and till in the cover crop before planting blueberry; Control weeds in and around planting.	Mulch to a depth of 5 to 6 inches.	Control weeds within rows; Mow between rows, as needed.	Control weeds within rows; Mow between rows, as needed.	Control weeds within rows; Mow between rows, as needed.	Control weeds within rows; Mow between rows, as needed.
<b>Wildlife</b>	<b>Birds, Rabbits, &amp; Voles</b>		Check and repair wildlife exclosures.		Mow to reduce rodent habitat; Prepare to place netting to limit birds from accessing plants.	Install and check bird netting regularly to ensure it is functional, repairing holes, as needed.	Install raptor perches; Protect predators like coyotes; Check and repair wildlife exclosures; Scout for voles and treat, as needed.

GROWTH STAGE		Planting	Dormant	Petal fall	After bloom	Harvest	End of season
<b>Abiotic</b>	<b>Plant Health</b>	Adjust soil pH to between 4.5 and 5.0 with sulfur the season before planting; Set plants on raised beds incorporated with composted pine bark or peat to improve drainage; Install drip irrigation.	Plant in raised (6 to 8 inches or more) beds for drainage; Ensure soil pH is between 4.5 and 5.0; Prune to remove old canes, weak growth, and reduce fruit load.	Fertilize with nitrogen at bloom and 6 weeks later; Apply slow release fertilizer containing iron chelate monthly from March through July if an iron deficiency is noted.	Collect leaf tissue for nutrient analysis (June 15 to August 15.); Fertilize as needed to promote plant vigor; Irrigate as needed to prevent drought stress.	Irrigate as needed to prevent drought stress.	Avoid excessive nitrogen fertilizer; Do not fertilize after July to reduce late-season growth that is more susceptible to winter injury; Irrigate as needed to prevent drought stress.

*May 2020*

**Editor:** Cheryl Kaiser, Plant Pathology Extension Support

**Photos:** Mark Longstroth, Michigan State University (pink, petal fall); Ansel Oommen, Bugwood.org (bloom); Mark Ehlenfeldt, USDA (harvest)