

# BLUEBERRIES GROWING GUIDE

by Jenny Slabber

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**South African farmers are into Blueberry farming for sure!** Just drive along the N1 between Paarl and Cape Town, or past George, Brits, or Magoebaskloof and you will notice greenhouse structures planted with blueberries-a-plenty.

## WHY SHOULD YOU CONSIDER CERTIFIED ORGANIC AS THE HEALTHY ALTERNATIVE ?

### THE MARKET

It is important to decide whether your intended market requires EU CERTIFIED ORGANIC product which will command a premium price vs conventional where there are large developments in SA, and as is common with agri products eventually an oversupply which will lead to poor prices.

### FARMING SYSTEMS

The growing space, location, climate, and market specifications or requirements will determine the best method of growing.

Blueberries can be grown in:

- A growing medium in pots, bales or troughs in a Greenhouse under controlled climatic conditions or;
- Direct in soil in an open land in suitable climates, but usually under shade nets to protect crops against loss to birds, hail, high winds, excess heat and to conserve water.

If the intention is to produce for the Certified Organic market, the crop should be planted into soil, as container growing does not comply to EU Organic Standards, but with the use of approved Inputs for Certified Organic, it may comply with USA NOP.

Hydroponic/fertigation production methods are very different to organic production methods, and growing systems will therefore be very costly and difficult to change between as most fertilizer programs with nutrient guidelines are not suited to Certified Organic growing, therefore there is no possibility of straight conversion.

### FERTILIZER PER HA/YEAR

**Please Note: This is an estimate for your planning only and on confirmation of selected option relevant professional technical advice can be supplied.**

#### Fertilizer for Certified Organic Program

**1st year: For planting in Soil  
(to be determined by Soil Analysis)**

300kg Vita Grow 2:3:2 (16)

OR

300kg Vita Veg 6:3:4 (16)  
2500L (50x50dm) SoilCare Earthworm  
Castings for soil conditioning  
pre-planting

**2nd & 3rd Years each:**

300kg Vita Green 5:1:5 (16)

### 3 different fertilizer options for Blueberries to be grown in containers or bags:

#### 1. FERTILISER FOR MIXING INTO GROWING MEDIUM:

##### SUMMER FERTILIZER

Mix 6 kg of Vita Grow 2:3:2 (16) per cubic meter (m3) into growing medium.

##### WINTER FERTILIZER

Mix 6 kg of Vita Veg 6:3:4 (16) per cubic meter (m3) into growing medium.

To protect plants from damping off or root disease SOILCARE EARTHWORM CASTINGS can be mixed into growing medium at a rate of 150dm per cubic metre (m3) or approximately 4 cups (1000 ml) per wheelbarrow of growing medium. VERMICULITE OR PERLITE can be added at 10 to 20% for water and nutrient retention and aeration.

#### 2. FERTILIZER FOR PLANTING OUT IN GROWING BAGS OR SOIL

##### BEFORE PLANTING:

Mix these organic inputs into soil or medium for growing bags as follows:

##### SOILCARE EARTHWORM CASTINGS

(Approved Input for Certified Organic). At 10 to 20% of planting mix, or 250ml per m2 for growing in soil.

**VERMICULITE OR PERLITE** medium size grade for soil aeration and water retention. Mix 10 to 20% ratio into growing medium, or 1L per m2 in soil.

Healthy Soil = Healthy Plants = Healthy People



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## 2. FERTILIZER FOR PLANTING OUT IN GROWING BAGS OR SOIL cont./

### GROWING BAGS:

Mix Vita Veg 6:3:4 (16) into growing medium at a rate of 1ml per L size of growing bag i.e. 4ml per 4L bag/ OR 6kg per 1m<sup>3</sup> of growing medium.

### IN SOIL:

For planting directly into soil apply 100g per m<sup>2</sup> of Vita Veg 6:3:4 (16) and till into prepared soil.

Add DOLOMITIC LIME (Aglime at about 10ml per 1L for growing medium or 200g per m<sup>2</sup> in soil) to add Calcium and Magnesium for good plant health.

Together with the nutrients supplied from the SOILCARE EARTHWORM CASTINGS, this should be adequate for the vegetative growth of blueberries for the 1st year.

### TOP DRESSING:

#### GROWING BAGS:

Apply Vita Green 5:1:5 (16) at 1ml per L size of bag i.e. 4ml per 4L bag after 6 weeks or apply Nourish 4:1:6 (11) Buds, Flowers & Fruit organic liquid fertilizer every 14 days (see Fertigation chart and adjust quantities accordingly for the growth phase.)

#### IN SOIL:

When planted in growing beds or lands, broadcast Vita Green 5:1:5 (16) over planted area at 80g per m<sup>2</sup> or apply Nourish 4:1:6 (11) Buds, Flowers & Fruit organic liquid fertilizer every 14 days (see Drip System chart and adjust accordingly for growth phase.)

If required, a further application of Vita Green 5:1:5 (16) can be applied as a topdressing, Nourish 4:1:6 (11) Buds, Flowers & Fruit liquid fertilizer (see chart for drip system and adjust accordingly for growth phase)

## 3. NOURISH ORGANIC LIQUID FERTILIZER FOR BLUEBERRIES

If your intention is to plant in a non-nutritive substrate according to US NOP standards (organic in non-soil medium is not allowed for EU organic standards) as a guideline only, accurate nutritional requirements for crop should be tracked and adjusted by regular sap or leaf analysis. Select from the Nourish liquid organic range.

- The Nourish liquid organic range is specially formulated so choose the N:P:K ratio for the required growth phase. Apply every 14 days or as required. See <https://talborne.co.za/liquid-fertilizers/>

- FUTURE FULVIC chelate's nutrients. Add at 10% of water volume. See: <https://talborne.co.za/future-fulvic/>
- The general application is from 5 to 50L per Ha, so adjust application rates for foliar or soil application, plant growth phase and sap or leaf analysis.
- The Calcium and Magnesium can be corrected with Plantos Verde as a foliar spray as required for boosting crop resilience to prevent pest and disease with Ca, Mg, Silica and micronutrients.

**Below is a general guide for application of Nourish organic liquid fertilizer per Ha based on the plant growth rate and vigor required. Get best advice from the Talborne Technical Services or a qualified Technical Consultant.**

### Fertigation System - 5 litre/10 litre/15 litre

#### Setting Ratios & Results

Slow:	Low growth and color:	Moderate growth and color:	Fast vigorous growth and color:
15,000 litres' water to 1-litre fertilizer	7,500 litres' water to 1-litre fertilizer	2,000 litres' water to 1-litre fertilizer	400 litres' water to 1-litre fertilizer

### Hose/Drip System - 5 litre

#### Setting Ratios & Results

Slow:	Low growth and color:	Moderate growth and color:	Fast vigorous growth and color:
1,000 litres' water to 1-litre fertilizer	500 litres' water to 1-litre fertilizer	250 litres' water to 1-litre fertilizer	100 litres' water to 1-litre fertilizer

So you would use about 5 - 25L Nourish Organic Liquid Fertilizer x 26 (applied every 2 weeks per year). Nourish is an approved input for EU and US NOP certified organic standards by Control Union.



**For more information, please contact us on:**

### Sales Enquiries

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