

Growing fruits with limited space

Just because you have only a little space doesn't mean you can't grow fruits successfully. For high yields you do need a spot that gets direct sun for at least half of the day. However, an area only ten feet square can support a gratifying amount of fruit production.

Some of the best small fruit choices for small areas are rabbiteye blueberries, strawberries, blackberries and muscadine grapes.

Blueberries require a soil pH below 5.5, so take a soil sample to find out what your soil pH is now. Peat moss can lower the pH if your soil has been limed in the past. All of the other fruits like a soil pH of 6.0 to 6.5. So you may need to add some garden lime if your soil pH is too acidic. Contact your University of Florida/Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS) Extension Office in your county for instructions on taking and submitting a soil sample for pH testing.

The blueberry cultivar Tifblue has vivid red fall color. Be sure to plant at least two varieties of rabbiteye blueberries together for pollination. The "Blueberry Gardener's Guide" is available online at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/mg359>.

Strawberries are perennial plants by nature but in Florida they are best grown as annuals. Strawberry plants grown as annuals are planted fall (October-November) and harvested the following spring. Following harvest, the plants are destroyed. There are many varieties to choose; however, it's best to avoid planting the "everbearing" varieties of strawberries in Florida. The publication, "Growing Strawberries in the Florida Home Garden" is available online at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/hs403>.

Blackberries are very productive if you select the correct cultivars. Cultivars adapted to Florida produce large, attractive fruit. A good publication to help with growing blackberries in Florida is available online at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/hs104>.

Muscadine grapes are native to the Southeastern United States. An extensive breeding program has resulted in many improved varieties. Scuppernong is a cultivar of muscadine. Other popular cultivars include Cowart, Fry, Carlos, Summit, Higgins and Nesbitt.

The muscadine vine can be used as a patio shade arbor or a fence cover. However, the fruit can be messy when they fall and can stain certain surfaces.

Because of the dreaded Pierce's disease of grapes, which kills European and American bunch grapes in our area, it's best to plant either muscadines or Florida bunch grapes because they are resistant to the disease. Visit <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/hs100> or

<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/mg105> online for more information on muscadine or bunch grapes.

Much information on home fruit production is available through the UF/IFAS Extension Office in your county and online at <http://solutionsforyourlife.ufl.edu>.

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