



## Growing Cranberries

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Cranberries were first used by Native Americans who discovered the wild berry's versatility as a food, a medicine to treat arrow wounds, and as a dye for rugs and blankets. The name "cranberry" derives from the Pilgrim name for the fruit, "craneberry", so called because the small, pink blossoms that appear in the spring resemble the head and bill of a Sandhill crane. European settlers adopted the Native American uses for the fruit and found the berry to be a valuable bartering tool. Cranberries are high in antioxidants, making them one of the healthiest sources of vitamin C, and American whalers and mariners carried cranberries on their voyages to prevent scurvy.

Check the moisture level of your plants immediately upon arrival. If you are unable to plant the same day, keep the soil at normal garden moisture levels. Contrary to popular belief, cranberries do not like saturated conditions.

**Planting Information:** For four plants, mark out an area that receives full sun and is about 4' x 4' (or 4' x 8' for eight plants), allowing 1' from the edge of the bed and 2' between plants. Dig out the soil down to about 6". Installing a garden edge of wood or plastic helps to keep the weeds out. Replace soil with a 50/50 mixture of peat moss and coarse, sharp sand - beach sand or general purpose sand will work. Add one cup of bonemeal, one cup of bloodmeal, one cup of Epsom salts, and one cup of rock phosphate to the sand/peat mixture and mix in well. Cranberries will not grow well in clay or silty soils with a high pH. Water to wet the peat moss. Once the bed is prepared, set the plants equally spaced with the rootball slightly deeper than the surface. Position plants at equal distances from each other and the edges of the bed.

**Fertilization:** Cranberries will tolerate normal soil fertility, but they prefer one high in ammonia forms of nitrogen. We recommend applying fish emulsion in a soil drench in the spring and again after fruit sets in the summer.

**Harvest:** Pick your berries by hand before the first killing frost, usually in late September to early October, once the fruit is a deep red color. The longer you allow the fruit to remain on the plant the "sweeter" the tart berry will become.

**Winter Protection:** Cranberries have evergreen leaves that will dry and become brittle once the ground freezes in late fall. Cover your plants in the fall, just before the soil freezes, with white plastic or leaves to protect them from drying, cold winds. Uncover the plants in mid March in southern states or early April in northern states.

**Additional Information:** Cranberries will fill in the bed with runners. In the second year after planting, and every third year thereafter, sprinkle about ½" of new sand on top of the plants in the early spring before growth begins. Work the sand into the plants to cover old leaves and new runner growth. This will encourage the plants to produce more uprights and fruit, and keep the planting rejuvenated. "Sanding" also helps prevent diseases and plant pests.

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