

Bluetta, a New, Early Ripening Blueberry Variety

A. D. DRAPER¹, L. F. HOUGH², D. H. SCOTT³, AND A. W. STRETCH⁴

Bluetta is a new, early-ripening blueberry variety introduced by the U. S. Department of Agriculture and the New Jersey Agriculture Experiment Station from their cooperative blueberry breeding program. Bluetta tested as G-3, originated as a seedling from a cross of No. 3 (North Sedgwick lowbush × Coville) × Earliblue made in 1947 by G. M. Darrow. It was selected in 1952 at Hammonton, New Jersey, by G. M. Darrow, D. H. Scott, and L. F. Hough.

Plants of Bluetta are short, compact-spreading and medium-vigorous. The fruit is medium-sized, light blue in color, firm, but has a broad stem scar. Even so, it ships well and no trouble from rot during transport has been encountered. The fruit ripens early with Weymouth, but has more flavor than that of Weymouth. Bluetta is consistently productive, appears to be winter hardy, and has set full crops of fruit in large commercial plantings.

It produced a full crop in 1968 in New Jersey when the yield of many varieties was substantially reduced by winter damage. Some comparative ratings of Bluetta and other early ripening varieties are given in Table I.

Bluetta, like other varieties, is susceptible to red ringspot virus. To avoid dissemination of this disease in infected plants, the stock was propagated by clonal units, and only clones free of red ringspot were distributed. In midsummer a red leaf condition develops in the plants that somewhat resembles the reddening associated with red ringspot virus. However, this is not related to the red ringspot virus disease. The reddening caused by red ringspot virus is a bright red, whereas the observed reddening is a dull red.

Bluetta shows promise as a very early-ripening variety to replace Weymouth and Earliblue.

Table I. Comparative ratings¹ of several blueberry varieties.

Variety	Size	Scar	Color	Firm	Prod.	Flavor	Days before Bluecrop
Bluecrop	9	8	9	10	10	7	0
Collins	8	8	8	8	7	9	7
Weymouth	7	6	6	7	8	5	14
Earliblue	9	7	8	10	6	8	14
Bluetta	7	6	8	8	9	7	14

¹Rating of 10 indicates most desirable characteristic, 1 the least desirable.

¹ and ³ Research Geneticist and Horticulturist, respectively; Crops Research Division, Agricultural Research Service, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Beltsville, Md.

²Horticulturist, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, N. J., and Vice Pres., A.P.S.

⁴Plant Pathologist, Crops Research Division, Agricultural Research Service, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, N. J.