Summary:

- Over the past 4 years, we have evaluated blueberry cultivars to identify which varieties have the best attributes as retail containerized plants in bloom or fruit. Most of our research has been in Florida, but we have also collaborated with growers in northern U.S. locations.
- We also evaluated cultural methods (cutting type, timing, day length, temperature, pinching, gibberellin (GA3) sprays) to enhance flowering and fruiting, and for season extension.

Our approach:

- For southern climates, the cultivars ‘Sunshine Blue’ (compact, well-branched, extended flowering period, early and prolific flowering, small leaves more resistant to disease and drought issues) and ‘Emerald’ (vigorous, well-branched, heavy flowering). For growers in northern U.S. ‘Top Hat’ works well (highly branched, heavy flowering, small and resistant leaves), and other growers have had success with other northern high-bush cultivars.
- Tissue culture liners branch more freely than tip cuttings. Plant in late spring to early summer into an unlimed peat-based substrate. Two or more pinches during summer-fall allows production of a well-branched fruiting plant for the following spring. Flower time can be hastened in the spring by bringing plants into warm long-day conditions.
- Applying a GA3 plant hormone spray at 250 ppm two to three times during open flowering promotes the formation of fruit without the need for pollinators, which helps inside greenhouses during the early season (but can increase height).

How can you use this information:

- Consider whether blueberries fit into your edible ornamentals marketing program. The biggest challenge is the long crop time.
- We can provide recommendations on cultivars, cultural methods, and a crop schedule.
- Evaluate cultivars and growing methods under your climate conditions. We can assist with trial design.