

# Highbush Blueberry Cost of Production – Nova Scotia

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## Introduction

Highbush blueberries are suited for small scale or part time growers, as well as full time or large operations. The start-up costs for growing this crop are quite large and include the cost of land, equipment, establishing plants and installing an irrigation system.

## Marketing

Several marketing options exist in Nova Scotia for a highbush blueberry grower and they include wholesale markets, local retail markets (grocery stores), roadside stands and pick your own operations. Highbush blueberries are not commonly processed in Nova Scotia.

## Production Considerations

Highbush blueberries grow best on sandy loam soils with a pH in the range of 4.5-5.0. Adequate drainage is vitally important, but so too is the availability of moisture, especially during the summer months.

## Sample Budgets

The sample budgets included in this publication summarize costs during three phases of highbush blueberry production: land preparation (Year 0), planting year (Year 1) and Mature planting (Year 8). To create the budgets, the following assumptions were made:

- 8 ha (20 acre) blueberry operation
- Well managed operation
- 1000 plants/acre
- 6000 lbs/acre total yield
- Price of \$2.50/pint (\$3.33/lb) for berries
- 1 pint = 12 ounces
- Average wage is \$10.83/hr

Budgets for intermediate production years (2-7) are not included, as they would have lower receipts and harvest costs than for the mature planting.

The sample budgets are meant to give you a guideline of what costs you should expect. This is by no means a complete list of all costs, as site suitability will play a large role in determining production costs.

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**Table 1: Fresh Market Highbush Blueberry Production Budget (per ha costs)**

Land Preparation (Year 0)		Planting Year (Year 1)		Mature Planting (Year 8)	
Land Cost	\$5000-7500 / ha	Total Plant Costs	\$18,900 / ha	Total Maintenance Costs	\$3000 / ha
Total Establishment Costs	\$3400 / ha	Total Maintenance costs	\$1300 / ha	Pollination Costs	\$425 – 1100 / ha
Total Irrigation Costs	\$7800-8400 / ha	Total Labor costs	\$4000 / ha	Total Bird Control Costs	\$40-850 / ha
Total Land Preparation costs	\$1250 / ha	Total Equipment Costs	\$2,600 - \$3,000 / ha	Total Marketing Costs	\$2300 - \$2700 / ha
				Total Labor Costs	\$11400 / ha
				Total Equipment Costs	\$2,600 - \$3,000 /ha
<b>TOTAL YEAR 0</b>	<b>\$17,450 - \$20,550 /ha</b>	<b>TOTAL YEAR 1</b>	<b>\$26,800 - \$27,200 /ha</b>	<b>TOTAL YEAR 8</b>	<b>\$19,765 - \$22,050 /ha</b>

**Table 2: Breakdown of each category:**

Land Preparation (Year 0)		Planting Year (Year 1)		Mature Planting (Year 8)	
Land	Virgin farm land vs. good farm land	Plant Material	Blueberry plants (2700/ha), grass seed	Maintenance	Fertilizer, herbicide, insecticide, fungicide, lab diagnostics (tissue & soil samples, 3 pest id's), irrigation, sawdust (mulch)
Establishment	Flagging stakes, soil test, fertilizer, peat moss	Maintenance	Fertilizer, lab diagnostics (tissue & soil samples, 3 pest id's), irrigation, sawdust (mulch)	Pollination	Bee rental (honey bees @ \$85/ hive, bumble bees @ \$220/box)
Irrigation Equipment	Filter, pump, drip tape + headers etc, reservoir/drilled well	Labor	General, pruning	Bird control	Visual scare devices, sonic bird repeller
Custom land preparation	Roundup spray, ploughing, fertilizer amendment, discing, harrowing	Equipment	Tractor, mower, sprayer, spreader (all newly purchased, except tractor – leased)	Marketing	Marketing containers, marketing costs (for 6000 lbs/acre yield)
				Labor	Pruning, general, harvesting (for 6000 lbs/acre yields)
				Equipment	Tractor, sprayer, spreader, mower (all newly purchased, except tractor – leased)

**Table 3: Business Opportunities for Highbush Blueberry Production:**

Variable	Value
Yield Scenario	20,000 pints/ha
	15,000 lbs/ha
Gross Revenue (@ \$3.33 lb.)	\$49,950/ha
Net revenue (gross revenue minus mature planting production costs)	\$27,900 - \$30, 185/ha
Break even “yield”	7,906 – 8,820 pints/ha