

# Growing Blueberries in Georgia

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ALEX CORNELIUS

CORNELIUS FARMS

# Georgia Production

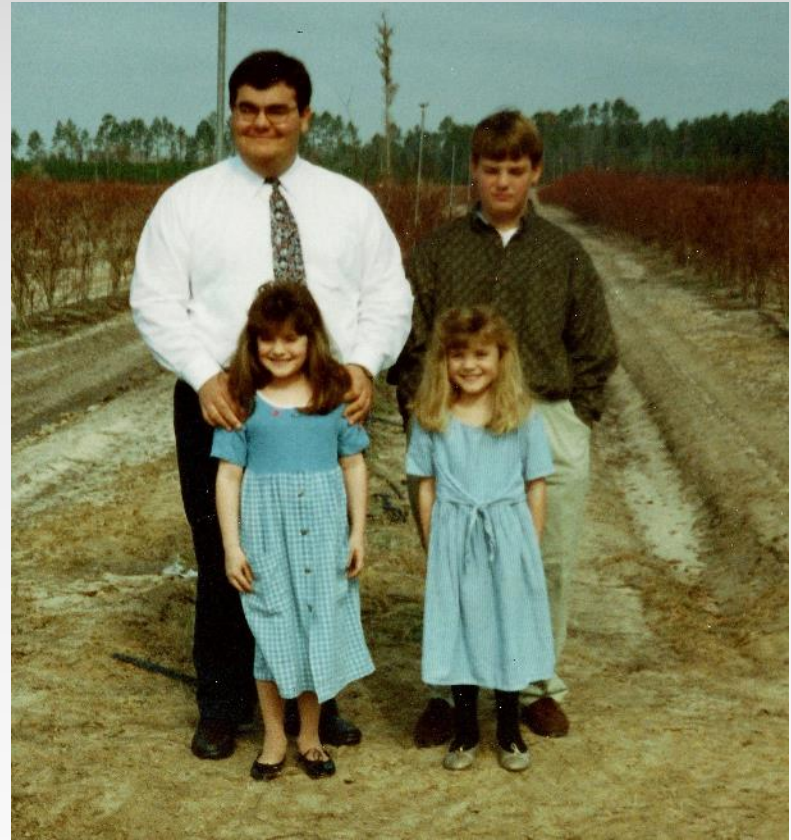


- As of 2014 – Georgia is the leading blueberry producer in the United States
- Alma Georgia – Georgia Blueberry Capitol
- Small Group of people
- Started growing faster in late 90s with positive health benefits of NABC research and Dr. Joseph
- Marketers started looking for 12 month programs to take to stores
- Merged with Chilean production for winter program

# Cornelius Farms

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- Started in 1986
- Joe – Brenda – Alex – Cathy
- 1989 – 17 acres
- 1993 – 61 acres
- 1996 – overhead irrigation to Rabbiteyes, planted Highbush
- Jerry Vanderwagen



# South Georgia

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- 1990's – money tight, short lenders
- Early 2000's – Highbush & Rabbiteye doing well
- 2003 – 2006 – 3 years interest only loans
- 2006 – Cornelius Blueberry Farm divided
- 2007 – Hard freeze Easter morning
- 2008 – good crop recovery, cheap process market



# Continued Growth

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[www.naturipefarms.com](http://www.naturipefarms.com)

- Continued market growth due to increasing consumer demand
- 2012 – McDonald's has fresh blueberries (RTE – ready to eat)
- Grocers are consolidating more and more every year

# Reasons for planting

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- Natural to our soil & climate
- Pine trees for bark – used for soil amendment
- Natural pH is 4.2 – 5
- Fields are successfully converted for Highbush & Rabbiteye



# Land Prep

- Traditional stumping & hauling off
- You don't want to burn stumps
- Be very careful with this
- Grinding method began in early 2000's



# CLEARING

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- After clearing comes harrowing
- Don't move too much topsoil
- Use GPS to lay off rows
- Eyeballing is okay
- Not sure for here and washing away of soils
- Row space
  - Highbush – 9-11 feet
  - Rabbiteye – 10-12 feet
- If hard pan recommend to subsoil under bed

# Irrigation

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- **Drip** – for daily watering and fertigation injection
- Use qualified Irrigation when available
- **Overhead** – if funds available, cheaper now than later
- .25-30tenths is what we do
- Some as high as .50 inch
- North Carolina .15inch
- Drip tape or tube



# Planting

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- Order plants 2 years ago
- Reputable & licensed company
- Royalties are collected on many varieties
- Royalties are a good thing to keep more coming

# Highbush vs Rabbiteye

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- Blooms early – high chance of frost
- Low chance of machine harvest due to being less firm
- Pruning is more critical
- Ripen early
- Generally larger berry size
- Most are self-fruiting whereas rabbiteye varieties are not
- Typical smoother textured berry
- “Southern Highbush is a plant looking for a place to die” – Gerard Krewer
- Blooms later than HB
- More Hardy
- Higher chance of machine harvest – more firm
- More vigorous plants
- Grow better on upland soils; require less organic matter
- More heat and drought tolerant
- More suitable for long distant shipping



# Highbush Varieties from Cornelius Farms

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- Camellia – early – mid season, large berry, strong color
- Emerald – vigorous bush, high yield, early, large & firm, sweet flavor
- Rebel – early ripening, good berry size
- Suziblue – Excellent productivity, large size, firm, main season variety
- Sweetcrisp – high vigorous, survivable, unusually firm, crisp, sweet
- Star – Large berry, good for long-distance shipping, harvested rapidly
- Farthing – Vigorous, heavy flowers, extended crop period
- Meadowlark – ripens early, potential machine harvest, mild flavor
- Kestrel – ripens early, sweet, plump & firm, picks well



# Rabbiteye Varieties from Cornelius Farms

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- Alapaha – vigorous, narrow crowns, late flower, high yields, very firm
- Austin- very early, good quality, high production
- Brightwell – one of top varieties in world
- Powder Blue – excellent hybrid, powdery blush, excellent quality
- Premier – large, ripens early, ideal for fresh commercial markets
- Vernon – early season, large, good yields, excellent firmness
- Ochlocknee – ripens late, superior berry size, high quality, vigorous
- Prince – very productive & vigorous, coastal region due to early bloom
- Titan – good shelf life, very large & successful



# Cornelius Farm Nursery Division

- 1989 – no good quality plants, started growing our own
- Sold excess to neighbors after planting
- Took on new orders in addition to our own plant needs
- 2012 – hired Nathan Baldree as nursery manager
- 2014 – started up website, [www.corneliusfarms.com](http://www.corneliusfarms.com)
- 2015 – still learning how to do small orders well



# Cornelius Farms Nursery Division

## 1 Gallon Containers

*18-20" Tall*

1-10.....	\$10
11-30.....	\$8
31-50.....	\$5
51-100.....	\$4
Over 101.....	\$2.50

## 32 Count Tray

*Per plant price*

1-10.....	\$5
11-30.....	\$4
31-50.....	\$3.50
51-100.....	\$3
Over 101.....	\$1.65

## 60 Count Tray

*Per plant price*

1-10.....	\$3
11-30.....	\$2.50
31-50.....	\$2.25
51-100.....	\$2
Over 101.....	\$1.30







QUESTIONS



[www.corneliusfarms.com](http://www.corneliusfarms.com)

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