• Reasons to prune
• Understanding the blueberry plant
• When to prune
• Pruning young plants
• Pruning bearing plants
• Bush renewal
• Disease management
Reasons to Prune

- Develop framework of young plants
- Maintain vigor and productivity
- Eliminate less productive canes
- Positioning the fruiting zone
- Positively affect berry size and quality
- Maintain bush health
Understanding the Blueberry Plant

- Cane age

- Year 4 and older
- Year 2-3
- Year 1

Missouri Blueberry School
Understanding the Blueberry Plant

- Growth habit

Upright (Nelson)  
Spreading (Nui)
Understanding the Blueberry Plant

- Cane Growth
Understanding the Blueberry Plant

- **Origin of new canes**

  \[\text{New canes arise from crown}\]

  \[\text{New canes arise from old canes}\]
Understanding the Blueberry Plant

- Fruiting buds
• Fruit buds and cane age

Year 1-2

Year 5 and older

Year 3-4
When to Prune

- Dormant
- Cold and dry
Pruning Young Blueberry Plants

• Goals
  – Obtain full production as soon as possible
Pruning Young Blueberry Plants

• Year 1-2
  – Minimal pruning
  – Remove weak twiggy growth
  – Remove damaged or diseased wood
  – Remove flower buds
Pruning Young Blueberry Plants

- Year 3 - 5
  - Minimal pruning
  - Remove weak twiggy growth
  - Remove damaged or diseased wood
  - Allow a small crop in year 3 (0.5-1 pint/bush), gradually increase crop in year 4-5
Pruning Mature Blueberry Plants

• Goals:
  – Maximize yield
  – Maximize fruit size and quality
  – Encourage consistent cropping
  – Position the fruiting zone
  – Manage diseases
Pruning Mature Blueberry Plants

- Remove damaged or diseased wood

Anthracnose

Stem Blight
Pruning Mature Blueberry Plants

- Remove 20% of the oldest canes each year (usually 1-2 canes)
  - Remove to the ground
  - Remove to a strong upright side shoot
Pruning Mature Blueberry Plants

• Remove low growing fruiting wood at base of plant
  – Most efficient harvest is from “knees to face”
Pruning Mature Blueberry Plants

- Detail prune
  - Thin out interior of bush
  - Thin out flower buds
Pruning Mature Blueberry Plants

- Consider growth habit
  - Upright growth habit
    - Remove older center canes to open up bush
    - Bluecrop, Collins, Lateblue, Elliot, Reka, Duke, Legacy, Nelson
  - Spreading growth habit
    - Prune to upright growth
    - Blueray, Berkeley, Coville, Patriot, Nui, Summit, Toro, Chandler
Bush Renewal

- Useful for neglected or old plantings
- Remove all shoots at the ground
- Thin resulting canes to the most vigorous 6-10 canes the following winter
Disease Management

- Diseases can be spread through pruning
  - Cane blight
  - Anthracnose
- Disinfect pruners between plants (infected plantings) and between cuts (infected wood)
- Remove and destroy prunings
Any Questions?

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