

Blue Tongue

Melastoma affine · *Melastomataceae*, native to Australia

DIFFICULTY Moderate

TYPE Evergreen perennial shrub, native to Australia

MATURITY 2–3 years to first useful crop



SUN
Full sun to part shade



WATER
Regular, needs consistent moisture



SOIL PH
5.5–6.5



SPACING
1–2m



DEPTH
as per pot

01 Its name is literal

Blue Tongue earns its name honestly — the sweet, edible berries stain the mouth and tongue a deep blue-purple, a novelty that makes this rainforest-margin native a fun, low-effort planting for warm, humid gardens.



loose stake, first year

02 Planting

METHOD	Plant from a nursery pot in a part-shaded, sheltered position.
SOIL	Humus-rich, moist, well-drained soil; dislikes drying out.
TIMING	Plant in the build-up to the wet season, in a warm, frost-free position.

Planting timing varies significantly by Australian climate zone. Set your zone above (or use the Find My Climate Zone tool) for guidance tailored to your own area.

04 Problems

- **Drying out** — the most common issue; keep soil consistently moist.
- **Cold or frost** — limits it to tropical and warm subtropical zones.
- **Full sun in hot climates** — can scorch leaves; part shade is safer.
- **Very few pests** — otherwise a trouble-free native.

03 Growing care

- Keep soil consistently moist — dislikes drying out between waterings.
- Part shade suits it well, especially through the hottest part of the day.
- Mulch well to help retain the moisture this plant needs.
- No frost tolerance — protect or avoid anywhere it gets cold.

05 Harvest & storage

SIGNS	Fruit turns dark purple-black and softens, usually through summer and autumn.
METHOD	Pick by hand once fully soft; expect blue-stained fingers.
CURING	None needed — good eaten fresh, straight off the bush.
STORAGE	Fridge a day or two; best eaten fresh rather than stored long-term.
PRESERVING	See Dehydrating (drying for long-term storage) or Freezing Produce (freezing a harvest surplus) for ways to keep a harvest surplus.

06 Companions & rotation

PLANT NEARBY	AVOID NEARBY	ROTATION NOTE
Other moisture-loving natives	Waterlogged, poorly drained spots	Not applicable — long-lived perennial shrub.