

We've got the blues

Written by Garden Inspirations

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July in Texas never fails to bring us the scorching temperatures for our 4th of July celebration, but did you know that July brings a little more Blue to Red, White, and Blue? July is in the height of Texas blueberry picking season and we started off our holiday weekend on a little roadtrip to East Texas. We picked blueberries until our fingers were blue and our buckets were overflowing.



We started so early towards Echo Springs Blueberry Farm that I think our chickens were still snoozing.

Our car was loaded with ice chests, sunscreen, straw hats, and baskets for our blueberry harvest – at a quick glance you might have thought we were on our way to a weekend at the lake! The scenic drive from Waxahachie to Murchison (pronounced M “urk” i son) had us looking out at the lush green fields, pine tree tunnels, longhorns and deer, and windy country roads. We used our navigation system with the Homer Simpson voice setting and he would patiently tell us that our destination was still further ahead each time we would venture off to a little garden center or produce stand that was along the way.

We reached Echo Springs Blueberry Farm two hours after our departure, I scrambled out of the

car to find the restroom while mom went inside for a fresh blueberry muffin. Farms have always had a way of capturing my heart and Echo Springs Blueberry Farm wrapped quickly around mine once I peeked at the rows and rows of blueberry trees. Growing up in mid-western Oklahoma, I never experienced blueberry picking and it was surprising to discover the blueberry trees were up to 12 feet tall and loaded with blueberries.

We had our fresh blueberry muffins while the folks talked to us about their farm. Echo Springs Blueberry Farm is one of the largest blueberry farms in Texas and open to the public from June – August. You can pick your own blueberries, take a tour of the farm, or purchase blueberries that are ready to eat and pop into your freezer. We like the taste of the Echo Springs blueberries and we hear its due from the natural fresh water springs that flow under the ground. Blueberry harvest season is June – July, find out more at www.echospringsblueberryfarm.com

When I was a little girl my mother read *Blueberries for Sal* by Robert McCloskey and the book described the sound the blueberries make when were dropped into the bucket, kerplunk kerplunk! As we

started picking at the very end of the row just as the sun was taking its place in the Eastern Texas sky, I heard all around me – “kerplunk, kerplunk”. I smiled at my mom and we started picking blueberries off the trees.



I wasn't sure what to expect, other than the hot temperatures, I didn't know that



I would enjoy filling up my buckets to the top with this little blue fruit. As I stood and worked on the trees, I had wonderful conversations with my mother, listened to the birds as we picked in silence for a while, and enjoyed listening to the other conversations of other families picking blueberries a few rows over. Even though I was standing outside with SPF70, a straw hat, long pants, and it was incredibly hot – the experience was peaceful. I thought of all the different ways we would be using our blueberry harvest, from our Farmer's Market Booth in Waxahachie, as a product in our Canning Class coming up in July, or nice warm blueberry cobbler on our diner table. I quickly filled up my gallon buckets and walked down pretty rows of blueberry trees with my mom.

Echo Springs Blueberry Farm has a little store with delicious treats, jams, jellies, pre-packaged cobbler recipes, cook-books, local produce, and much more. We purchased our berries and a couple of blueberry tea bags and set out for the rest of our adventure – natural springs to fill up our water jugs, lunch at The Shed in Edom, Texas, and a quick nursery stop at Blue Moon Gardens. It was a wonderful start to our Red, White, and BLUE holiday.

Donelle Simmons is part-owner with her mother, Marilyn Simmons of Garden Inspirations – a garden education company located in Waxahachie, Texas. Learn more about Garden Inspirations at www.gardeninspirations-tx.com 214-842-2100