



J&L Garden Center

The All Season Gift and Garden Center

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Growing Strawberries



Nothing beats the taste of a 'home-grown', 'just-picked', 'sun-ripened' strawberry. Strawberries are one of the most popular small fruits for the home garden. They are very easy to grow, and they taste great fresh from the garden, frozen, in pies, or in jam. Strawberry plants can produce up to one quart of berries per plant. They grow well in a wide variety of soils and in most areas of the garden.

They can also be grown in containers on a porch, a deck, or a patio. They are very easy to grow, and it's definitely worth your while to plant strawberries in your own gardens.

Planting Strawberries

Plant strawberries as early in the spring as possible. They grow and produce better in the cool spring and fall weather, than in the hot summer weather. Strawberries prefer sunny areas. They will grow in the shade, but they do not produce berries as well in the shade as they do in the sun. Strawberries grow best in sandy, well drained soil. If you have a heavy soil, or a soil that does not drain well, you must physically change the soil to successfully grow strawberries. Try building a raised bed garden; the results will be that your strawberry plants will produce much better.



Spread two or three inches of Bumper Crop Compost, aged-manure or well-rotted mulch, over the entire garden area. Apply four to five pounds of either **5-10-10 Flower Fertilizer** or **6-10-4 Vegetable and Flower Fertilizer** per 100 square feet of your garden area. Rototill the soil six to ten inches deep.

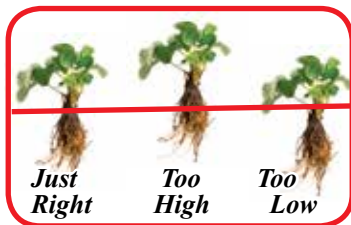


Dig a large hole and mix 3 to 4 tablespoons of **Dr. Earth Starter Fertilizer** into the bottom of each hole.

Plant strawberry plants twelve to eighteen inches apart. Plant strawberries carefully, making sure the crown is placed just above the soil surface.



Do not plant the crown too deeply, or the plants will die. Planting strawberries too shallow will cause the plant to struggle, and produce fruit poorly. Water the plants thoroughly as soon after planting as possible to eliminate any air pockets around the roots.



After planting and watering them in, be sure water them regularly. Keep your plants reasonably moist for the first month after planting. They need to have a chance to root thoroughly before they dry out.



Fertilizing Strawberries

Fertilize strawberries twice each year for best results. Fertilize them very lightly early in the spring, before they start to grow with either **Dr. Earth Tomato and Vegetable Food** or with **6-10-4 Vegetable and Flower Fertilizer**. Fertilize them again at the end of the harvest season: mid-August or September.

Watering Strawberries

Do not over-water strawberries. Keep strawberry plants moist, but do not keep them soggy wet. There is a fine line between just the right amount of water and watering them too much. Too much water may cause the plants to produce more leaves than desired, making the plant produce fewer, softer strawberries. Too much water also causes root rot, a common disease that kills many types of plants.



Day Length in Strawberries

Strawberries are sensitive to the length of day; it's actually the length of the night that the plant responds to, rather than the length of daylight. It is called photoperiodism.



Spring crop strawberries do not produce flower buds until the days are short and the nights are long. Spring crop berries set flower buds in the fall, during the short day period, and then produce berries the following spring, when the plants begin to grow.

Everbearing varieties are usually long-day and short night sensitive. They produce flower buds while the days are long and quit producing flower buds when the day length shortens in the fall.

Day Neutral varieties are not affected by the day length at all. They produce flower buds anytime the day length is more than 12 hours. Day neutral varieties are often sold as everbearing strawberries.

Everbearing and Day Neutral strawberry plants start producing flower buds soon after planting them. They continue producing flower buds throughout the growing season. Be sure to remove the first few flowers to prevent the plant from producing fruit until the roots have a chance to develop. After the plants are established you can expect

a delicious crop of berries the rest of the summer and into the fall, depending on the variety of strawberry you planted.



Be sure to pick the berries as soon as they ripen, this helps the plant continue to produce berries. Too many overripe berries left on the plant will slow leaf growth and will prevent further flower bud formation.

Spring crop strawberry plants do not produce fruit the first season they are planted. They grow leaves and roots during the spring and summer. They set their fruiting buds during the fall. After the winter rest period, strawberry plants produce flower buds.

The fruit starts ripening in June and may continue to ripen for several weeks, depending upon the variety. After the fruit has ripened, the plant goes semi-dormant, until a new set of leaves starts growing mid-summer. This set of leaves help produce the fruiting buds (in the fall) for next year's fruit crop. This cycle repeats year after year. However, after a year or two, the plant will start to produce fewer, smaller berries.

Dividing Strawberries

Strawberry plants may produce fruit for 4 or 5 seasons. However, after 2 or 3 years the berries may become smaller, less sweet, or may even become more tough to eat.



When the strawberry plants start to produce smaller berries, remove the older "Mother Plants" and replace them with some of the new runners, or "Daughter Plants".

The average life span of a strawberry plant is four or five years. However, many commercial strawberry growers will replace their plants every year or two.



Several fungi attack the roots of strawberries and eventually cause them to die. Usually, there are no chemicals that control these diseases. Removing older plants and replacing them with new, healthy starts is usually the best way to prevent this disease from both starting and spreading.

It is also a good practice not to trade plants with friends, especially if any plants have been grown in areas with any known root diseases or viruses. It is always best to start with young, fresh, disease-free plants.

Container Gardening

Strawberries have a relatively small root ball and can be grown in containers as small as 10-12 inches in diameter and 8 inches deep. However, the smaller the container, the more frequently you will need to water.



Keeping the soil in strawberry jars evenly moist can be challenging. Most jars are made of clay, which tends to dry out easily, and they're usually positioned in the sunniest

spot in the garden. The design of the strawberry jar also makes it difficult to get water out to the sides of the container where the plants' roots are.

An easy solution is to make a watering tube. Cut a 1" PVC Pipe 2" or 3" longer than your pot and cap the bottom end. Drill 1/8" to 1/4" holes 3" to 4" apart all the way along the pipe. Place the watering tube in the middle of the strawberry jar as you start to fill it with soil. When you water, fill the tube with water. The tube will distribute the water throughout the pot.



Another solution is to use Water Holding Polymer Granules, such as **Soil Moist**, to absorb and store water. These granules slowly release their stored water as the plant needs it. This storage and release process reduces watering requirements by 50% to 75%, particularly in dry, hot climates. The crystals will remain effective in the soil for 3-5 years.



Soil Moist must be incorporated into the soil; do not top dress or place it on the surface. It is easiest to use this polymer in its swelled state; so you know how much is being used. It can be also be used dry, but remember the crystals expand greatly when moistened. One teaspoon of **Soil Moist** is all that is needed for a 6" pot.

Strawberry jars do not require a large amount of fertilizer all at one time, but they do need to be fed continually all summer. A slow-release fertilizer like **Osmocote**, added to the potting soil at the time of planting, will feed most containers for 3 months. Osmocote can also be top dressed to already potted plants. Each time you water, your plants are being fertilized.



You can use a water soluble fertilizer, such as **Fertilome Blooming and Rooting Fertilizer** every 2 to 3 weeks during the summer, while you are watering. If you use **Osmocote**, you do not need to use a liquid fertilizer as often; maybe just once a month to give your plants a little burst of new growth or stimulate some new colorful flowers. *Please read our Container Gardening Handout for more information.*



Recommended Varieties

Everbearing Varieties

They aren't really "everbearing." They generally produce two harvests per year: one in the spring, and another in the late summer or fall. Under ideal conditions, it is possible for some everbearing strawberry patches to produce three berry harvests. Everbearing varieties do not produce as many runners as other types.



Day Neutral Varieties

They produce flowers all summer, they are not influenced by the day length. They produce as long as temperatures are between 35 and 85 degrees Fahrenheit. Day-neu-

tral strawberries do not develop as many runners as June bearing. They often produce smaller strawberries than the June bearing and everbearing strawberry varieties.



Fort Laramie

Everbearing variety, produces two crops (June-July & September). Does well in containers; good variety for strawberry planters; produces a lot of runners. Extremely winter hardy; does well in colder areas. Large, bright scarlet fruit with dark pink to scarlet interior. Firm sweet flesh is exceptionally aromatic. Good for eating fresh, freezing and preserves. Very heavy crop. Somewhat susceptible to mildew.

Hecker

Day neutral variety. Produces almost continually from June until frost. Medium sized, dark-red, firm fruit. Fair flavor and quality. Excellent shipping because of berry firmness. Not one of the soft-fleshed strawberries.

Ozark Beauty

Everbearing variety. Does well in containers. Medium to large berry in June-July & September. Very cold hardy. Good producer with sweet bright-red berries.

Quinault

One of the most popular everbearing varieties. Produces a large crop in June-July & again in September. Large, soft berries with an open center. Excellent flavor. Good for fresh eating, desserts, and preserves. Not recommended for freezing. High yielding, vigorous plants produce many runners. Resistant to Leaf Scorch, Leaf Spot, and Root Rot, but is susceptible to mildew. Berries up to 2" in diameter. Does well in containers.

Seascape

Day-neutral variety. Seascape plants have a low chilling requirement and are vigorous. They are highly tolerant of many virus diseases, but moderately susceptible to Leaf Spot. Fruit is medium to long. Color is red inside and out, with an attractive glossy finish. It is noteworthy for high flavor, high yield, large fruit size, firmness, symmetry, attractive appearance and general flexibility in planting requirements.

Tri star

Day neutral variety. Produces almost continually from June until frost. Deep red, glossy, firm fruit of good flavor and quality. Produces a heavy, very early, spring crop of small to medium fruit. Cool fall weather will bring larger, more elongated fruit. Fall crop is the heaviest. Fresh fruit flavor is excellent. Also recommended for freezing. This is a good variety for hanging baskets. Resistant to Red Stele and Verticillium Wilt.

June Bearing Varieties:

June bearing varieties set buds in the fall (they need short days and long nights to set the fruit buds). They produce



flowers and berries the next year, in the late-spring. They produce abundantly for three to four weeks from early June to early July.



Allstar

Produces a good crop of very large, light-colored, sweet berries. Glossy, firm fruit makes this variety excellent for fresh eating. This widely adapted variety has performed consistently well from the East to central Midwest. It is highly resistant to red stele, with some resistance to Verticillium wilt.

Hood

Produces a large crop in June-July. The large round berry is considered to have the best table quality. Hood is known best as a fine preserve and jam berry. Resistant to Root Rot and Mildew, but is quite susceptible to viruses. Bears entire crop over a short period. Popular home garden variety. Not particularly winter hardy.

Sequoia

One of the most popular spring crop strawberry variety. Very large, dark red berries with a real good flavor. Fair to good quality for dessert and freezing. It is sometimes listed as an everbearer - but this is not strictly true, even though it behaves like an everbearer in California. It has an extremely long season. Sequoia is the earliest Spring Crop strawberry and it keeps bearing fruit several weeks after the typical Spring Crop variety is finished. Sweetest and best tasting fresh. Good for jams. Does well in containers.

Honeoye

June-bearing variety. Early season producer, sets large, firm, bright orange-red to red fruit. Has a consistent size throughout the harvest season. The flavor is excellent, sweet and highly aromatic. It is one of the heaviest producers. Best flavor when grown in raised beds or in lighter soils. Exceptional Winter hardiness. Great for freezing.

Strawberry Pests

Root Weevils are small black beetles that live in the soil during the day. They crawl out on the leaves, after dark, and eat small notches on the edge of the leaves. Eating the leaves does not hurt the plant, but the larvae eating the roots weakens, and kills the plants. Unfortunately there is not an effective control for root weevils in the strawberry patch.



Removing and thinning the older plants is perhaps the best control. **Diatomaceous Earth** and **Beneficial Nematodes** are organic controls that are sometimes helpful.

To control root weevil chemically you must spray after sunset to kill the adult weevil. Apply an insecticide that is labeled for use on edible plants. **Sevin, Eight, Permethrin, and Spinosad** are labeled for use on strawberries, and many other flowers, fruits, and vegetables. They control many insects, but they are not always effective for controlling the strawberry root weevil.



Be sure to read the label, and be sure to wait the required length of time after application before eating the fruit.

It is not generally safe to spray insecticides during the harvest season because of how long you need to wait before being able to eat the fruit.

Please read our Root Weevil handout for more information.

Slugs & Snails eat the strawberry fruit and leave an awful mess. These pests do not kill the plants, they just ruin the fruit. Apply **Corry's Slug & Snail Bait** or **Sluggo Snail Bait** just before dark. Re-apply the bait every week or two. Both of these snail baits are very effective, when used regularly. They are pet safe, and they safe to use around strawberries, and other vegetables, when used according to label directions.



Persistence is the best control for snails. If you are consistent, you may win the war. If you only apply the bait occasionally, the snails have a good chance to win the battle.

Please read our Slug and Snail handout for more information.

Birds love strawberries. Bird repellents, Plastic Owls, and scarecrows sometimes work, but the only sure control for birds is to cover the plants with netting. If you have quail in the neighborhood, be sure to secure the netting at ground level as well.



Sowbugs and Millipedes are a nuisance problem in strawberries, not a major concern. They eat old, dead or damaged fruit (damaged by slugs, snails, or birds). Control these pests by keeping old fruit removed. Eight granules are labeled for use around edible crops, and control many unwanted insect pests. Just be sure to read the label first, and follow any precautions listed.

More Resources:

http://extension.usu.edu/files/publications/publication/Horticulture_Fruit_2008-06pr.pdf

<http://extension.oregonstate.edu/deschutes/sites/default/files/ec1307.pdf>

<http://www.oregon-strawberries.org/attachments/Growing-strawberries.pdf>

<https://extension.usu.edu/utah/files/uploads/Recipes-Cooking-Canning/FruitSaucesSyrups.pdf>



Using Chemicals Safely

Using a pesticide, except as registered by the manufacturer, is a violation of the law. The results of misusing a pesticide may damage your plants or kill unwanted targets.

Whenever you use a pesticide, pay special attention to the health and safety recommendations of the manufacturer. You must take special precautions to assure the safety of people who may come in contact with the spray, and to

prevent contamination. Wear the proper clothing, choose a sprayer that is appropriate for your situation, and use the proper pesticide.

The first rule of using chemicals is:

Always Read The Label of All the Chemicals You Are Going to Use. Check the label to find out if the chemicals are the correct products for the plants you are treating.

Check the label to find out how much of each chemical you should use. If a label says to use 1 tablespoon per gallon of water, then use 1 tablespoon per gallon of water; not two or three.

