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Passionate for Pets, Plants & People

Strawberries

Botanical name: *Fragaria*

Plant type: [Fruit](#)

USDA Hardiness Zones: [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#), [8](#), [9](#), [10](#)

Sun exposure: [Full Sun](#)

Soil type: [Loamy](#)

Soil pH: [Slightly Acidic to Neutral](#)

These sweet, juicy berries are treats when right off the plant. Supermarket berries tend to be tart with grainy texture; this is because the natural sugar in the berries begins converting to starch as soon as it is plucked from the plant. It's definitely worth your while to try planting your own strawberries, and the good news is that they are relatively easy to grow if you have full sun.

Strawberry plants come in three types:

- Day-Neutral: Insensitive to day length, these varieties produce buds, fruits and runners continuously if temperature remains between 35 and 85. Production is less than that of Junebearers.
- Everbearer: These varieties form buds during the long days of summer and the short days of autumn. The summer-formed buds flower and fruit in autumn, and the autumn-formed buds fruit the following spring.
- Junebearer: Length-of-day sensitive, these varieties produce buds in the autumn, flowers and fruits the following spring, and runners during the long days of summer.

For the home garden, we recommend Junebearers. Although you will have to wait a year for fruit harvesting, it will be well worth it.

Planting

- Buy disease-resistant plants from a reputable nursery, of a variety recommended in your area.
- Plan to plant as soon as the ground can be worked in the Spring.
- Strawberries are sprawling plants. Seedlings will send out runners, or 'daughter' plants, which in turn will send out their own runners.
- Make planting holes deep and wide enough to accommodate the entire root system without bending it. However, don't plant too deep: The roots should be covered, but the crown should be right at the soil surface.
- Provide adequate space for sprawling. Set plants out 20 inches apart, and leave 4 feet between rows.
- Roots shouldn't be longer than 8 inches when plants are set out. Trim them if necessary.
- pH should be between 5.5 and 7. If necessary, amend your soil in advance.
- Strawberries require 6-10 hours a day of direct sunlight, so choose your planting site accordingly.
- Tolerant of different soil types, although prefer loam. Begin working in aged manure or compost a couple months before planting.
- Planting site must be well-drained. Raised beds are a particularly good option for strawberries.
- Practice crop rotation for the most success. Do not plant in a site that recently had strawberries, tomatoes, peppers, or eggplant.
- Establish new plants each year to keep berry quality high each season.

Care

- In the first year, pick off blossoms to discourage plants from fruiting. If not allowed to bear fruit, they will spend their food reserves on developing healthy roots. The yields will be much greater in the second year.
- Eliminate daughter plants as needed. First and second generations produce higher yields. Try to space each plant about 10 inches apart.
- Moisture is incredibly important due to shallow roots. Water adequately, about one inch per week. They need a lot of water when the runners and flowers are developing and again in the fall when the plants are mature.
- Keep the beds mulched to reduce water needs and weed invasion.
- Be diligent about weeding. Weed by hand, especially in the first months after planting.
- When the growing season is over, mow or cut foliage down to one inch and mulch plants about 4 inches deep with straw, pine needles or other organic material. This can be done after the first couple of frosts, or when air temps reach 20 F.
- Remove mulch in early spring, after danger of frost has passed.
- Row covers are a good option for protecting blossoms and fruit from birds.

Harvest/Storage

- Fruit is ready for harvesting 4–6 weeks after blossoming.
- Harvest only fully red (ripe) berries, and pick every three days.
- Cut by the stem; do not pull the berry.
- Harvest will last up to 3 weeks. You should have an abundance of berries, depending on the variety.
- Store unwashed berries in the refrigerator for 3–5 days.
- Strawberries can be frozen whole for about 2 months.