

Growing Strawberries

Why Grow Strawberries?

- If you care for plants properly, you can obtain enough berries for your family from a relatively small area.
- Strawberry plantings can remain productive for 3 or 4 fruiting years.

Types of Strawberries

- June-bearers – produce only one crop per year in June or July.
- Everbearers – produce two crops, one in June or July and the other in the fall.
- Day-neutrals – produce fruit almost continuously through the growing season except when it is very hot.
- The fruit of everbearers and day-neutrals typically is smaller, and total seasonal yields often are lower than those of June-bearers.

Selecting a Site

- Full sun is needed for best production.
- To minimize insect and disease problems, rotate the site each time you make a new planting (every 3 to 4 years).
- Avoid planting where tomatoes, peppers, potatoes, eggplants, strawberries, raspberries or blackberries have grown in the past 3 years. These plants can be the hosts for fungi that cause diseases such as Verticillium wilt.

Selecting a Cultivar

- June-bearer cultivars include Hood, Totem, Benton and Tillamook. They produce many runners.
- Everbearer cultivars include Quinault and Fort Laramie. They produce few runners.
- Day-neutrals include Tristar, Tribute, and Selva. They produce fruit in cycles from early spring until frost.

Preparing the Soil

- *Best:* a raised bed of well-drained loam soil, high in organic matter that has a pH between 6 and 7.
- *Avoid:* planting in heavy clay soils. If the only soil available has poor drainage, you may be able to improve it by tilling and adding organic matter.

Planting Systems

There are two systems: *Matted-row* and *Hill* systems.

- *Hill system* — preferred for everbearers and day-neutrals: set plants 12 to 15 inches apart in double- or triple-wide rows. Aisles should be 1½ to 2 feet wide.
- *Matted-row system* — usually for June-bearers but you can also grow them in a hill system: set plants about 15 inches apart in the row with 3 to 4 feet between rows.

Planting

- Purchase certified, disease-free plants.
- Plant as early as you can work the soil in spring.
- Planting depth is very important for strawberries. At planting, dig a hole for each plant large enough to accommodate the roots without bending them. Spread the root mass and set the plant at the same depth

it was in the nursery container; with bare root plants, be sure the midpoint of the crown is level with the soil surface.

- June-bearers produce very little fruit in the planting year, and it is best to remove any blossoms that come on during the first summer so as not to stress the plants. With everbearers and day-neutrals, remove only the first flush of flowers; allow blooms after July 1st. All types of plants will be in full production the year after planting.

Fertilizing

- *Observe plant growth:* Leaves pale green or yellow and poor runner growth may indicate nitrogen deficiency.
- In the planting year, fertilize plants with a well-balanced fertilizer such as 16-16-16. Apply 12.5 ounces of 16-16-16 per 10-foot row. Do not apply all the fertilizer at once. Instead, divide the total amount into thirds, and apply the first third 2 weeks after planting, the next third 1 month later, and the final third an additional month later. If you use manure, wait until late fall or early winter to apply.
- For established strawberries, fertilize June bearers in late summer. Apply 12.5 ounces of 16-16-16 per 10-foot row. Broadcast the fertilizer all at once, spreading it evenly over the entire row length and width. Irrigate right after fertilizing. Give day-neutral or everbearing types the same amount of fertilizer, but divide it into thirds or fourths and apply in equal installments from spring through early August.

Irrigation

- 1 to 1.5 inches of water per week during the growing season.
- Two critical times, after the first season, when good soil moisture is important — just after bloom through harvest, and from late August through early fall.

Weed Management

- Weeds compete with plants for water and nutrients, so keep weeds out of plantings.

Pests and Diseases

- The most serious disease problems of strawberries are *Botrytis*, fruit rot, root rot, and Verticillium wilt.
- Insect problems include root weevil, aphid, spider mite, and crown moth.

OSU Extension Service Resources

Visit your OSU Extension Service online at <http://extension.oregonstate.edu/catalog>

Growing Strawberries in Your Home Garden EC 1307

Strawberry Cultivars for Oregon EC 1618

Soil Sampling for Home Gardens and Small Acreages EC 628

Master Gardener™ Advice

- Call Home Horticulture Helpline: 503-655-8631 (Clackamas County), 503-821-1150 (Washington County), 503-445-4608 (Multnomah County).
- For other 10-Minute University™ handouts and class schedule, visit www.cmastergardeners.org or www.metromastergardeners.org.
- Look for Master Gardeners at area Farmers' Markets.

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