

Strawberries

SELECTION OF SITE Strawberries do well in any good garden soil, however, a well drained area is best. Avoid low lying areas where spring frosts are likely to injure the early blossoms,

PREPARATION OF SOIL Work soil as early as weather permits in the spring. Try to work the ground to a depth of 6-8". Incorporation of well-decomposed organic matter (cotton boll compost or well rotted manure) into the planting bed will improve both the water holding capacity of the soil and the drainage. Strawberries like fairly rich soil. Sandy to slightly gravelly soils are ideal. They prefer a slightly acid soil pH of 5.0- 6.0. Plant either in early Spring or early Fall. An individual strawberry plant requires one square foot of space. They produce runners (horizontal stems with new plants along their length), so if plants are set a foot apart, all runner will need to be trimmed off as they form. Alternatively, plants can be placed a couple of feet apart and the runners allowed to fill the space in between.

PLANTING When planting, fan out the roots if purchased bare root, and set the crown just above the soil line. If planted deeper the crown will rot; any shallower and the roots will dry out.

FERTILIZING For new Spring or Fall plantings side dress 10 days after setting out plants with Ferti-lome Gardeners Special, keep at least 4 inches from plant crown. For established plants, fertilize early in Spring and again in late Summer as strawberries initiate their flower buds in the Fall and the next season's berries develop from food stored in the crown. Another option is to use a complete slow release fertilizer, such as Osmocote, (lasting 4-5 months) which needs to be applied only once in the Spring. Do not fertilize excessively in Spring especially prior to harvest as fruit rot and poor fruit quality may result.

TYPES OF STRAWBERRIES June-bearing or Spring-bearing plants produce a single crop each year. Generally speaking, these are the largest and highest quality of strawberries grown. To encourage vigorous growth and strong plants, remove blossoms and runners that appear the first year plants are set out.

Ever-bearing plants produce one crop during a normal season and another in the Fall with a few fruits in between. The first year they are planted it is best to remove blossoms and runners on everbearers until July. This will encourage them to produce stronger plants and will yield a heavier Fall crop. For Everbearers fertilize (1 lbs. / 100 sq. ft.) mid season.

MULCHING, WINTER PROTECTION A three inch layer of hay mulch applied right before a hard freezing occurs gives winter protection to your plant but also keeps down grasses and weeds. In the early spring when the plants show signs of growth remove most of the mulch leaving enough mulch to cover between the beds. This will help cut down on rot.

Strawberry plants generally produce well for only three to four years. At that time, move young runners to a new planting bed to discourage pests and disease.



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