

Timely tips to ensure strawberry success

Homegrown strawberries are a billion times better tasting than the hard, rarely ripe, flavorless selection in the supermarket. Strawberries are cold hardy and adaptable, making them one of the easiest berries to grow and are the first fruit to ripen in spring. While most fruit trees can take several years to begin bearing, you can harvest your homegrown strawberries the very first season you plant. And even if you live in an apartment or small home, you can grow strawberries in a container on your balcony, rooftop, or patio. If your horizontal space is limited, consider growing strawberries in a hanging basket, strawberry pot or stacked planter, which will allow you to take advantage of vertical growing space as the strawberry plants tumble out over the edges.

There are two main kinds of strawberries: "June-bearing" and "Ever-bearing" varieties. June-bearing varieties bear all at once, usually over a period of about 3 weeks. Because of their earliness, high quality and concentrated fruit set, June-bearers, like All-star, produce high yields of very large, sweet, extra juicy berries in late mid-season, which is usually late spring and early summer, depending on your geographic region. These are the best



variety for preserving.

"Ever-bearing" strawberries produce high yields of big, sweet berries from late spring until frost, with concentrated fruiting in late summer and fall. Perfect for large containers or raised beds, where you can give them attentive watering and feeding.

Bonnie Plants, available at most garden retailers nationwide, offers a good selection of ever-bearing strawberries including the very popular Quinault variety. This variety offers large berries ripening in abundance, ideal for preserves or fresh eating.

Tips to ensure strawberry success:

*When planting strawberries in-ground, be sure the crown is above soil level and the upper most roots are 1/4 inch beneath soil level, buried crowns rot and exposed roots dry out.

Strawberry plants should be placed approximately 14 to 18 inches apart from each other in neat rows that are separated by 2-3 feet each. Let runners fill in until plants are 7-10 inches apart.

*Use mulch to keep berries clean, conserve moisture and control weeds.

*If you want to keep it simple, plant strawberries in a container. Just remember that container plantings need much more water than in-ground plantings, usually once a day and if it's hot, twice. To know when to water, stick your finger or a pencil 1.5" deep into the soil in the center of the pot, if the soil is moist; don't water, if dry, it's time to water.

Strawberry pots are an obvious container choice for growing strawberries. You can fit several plants in one pot; just make sure whatever type of garden pot you use has good drainage. 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. Another great choice that's practical and pretty are strawberries in hanging baskets, once they begin to fruit they're showstoppers and fruits are easy pickens.

*Strawberries like well-drained fairly rich soil, so be sure to add compost or other organic matter when preparing the pot or patch.

*They need full sun, 6-8 hours per day, will grow in all zones and should be fed twice a year -- when growth begins and after the first crop.

*Control slugs and snails by handpicking them off plants and prevent theft from birds by covering your patch or pot with netting as the first berries ripen.

Strawberries are one of the easiest and most delicious home garden fruits to grow. Try growing them with kids, plants produce fruit throughout the summer and children will love to pluck them right off the plant, wash and eat! If your kids have yet to plant and care for a fruit or vegetable, strawberries are a perfect choice for their first gardening experience. Kick off this gardening season with your kids and get growing strawberries!


For more info on growing strawberries as well as vegetables and herbs please visit: MailScanner has detected a possible fraud attempt from "sable.godaddy.com" claiming to be www.bonnieplants.com

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DID YOU KNOW?

- Strawberries are the first fruit to ripen each spring.
- There are 200 seeds on an average strawberry.
- Despite their name, strawberries aren't technically berries—they're accessory fruits.
- The seeds can grow into new strawberry plants, but most instead reproduce through runners.
- According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Americans eat an average of 3.4 pounds of fresh strawberries every year.
- California produces 75 percent of strawberry crops in the U.S.
- Stop and smell the strawberries! Considered members of the rose family, they give off a sweet fragrance as they grow on bushes.
- Considered a perennial, strawberry plants will grow back year after year.
- Native Americans were also among the earliest people to eat strawberries.
- Don't rinse cut strawberries under water until you're ready to eat them—it speeds up spoiling.
- Strawberries are grown in every single U.S. state and Canadian province.



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