

Strawberries

General Growing Tips

Strawberries are very easy to grow. Strawberries can grow and produce for many years in your garden. They multiply themselves so you can continue to expand your strawberry patch every year. The hardest part about growing them is right after you plant them, you have to force yourself to remove their blooms so that the plant can become established before growing fruit.

Choosing the best location

Strawberries grow in most soil types but prefer a well-drained soil. If you have soil that is clay like, you may want to build a raised bed for your strawberries, as hard clay is about the only thing, they don't grow well in. You can also grow them in pots, containers, or hanging baskets.

Strawberries need full sun. While they grow with as little as 6 hours of sun a day, the size of the berries and the quantity produced will be small. Strawberries have shallow roots, so they need to be planted somewhere where they will not be overwhelmed by ground cover.

Planting Your Strawberries

Strawberries prefer soil that is high in organic matter, so add compost, peat, or well-rotted manure to the bed before planting. It is good to note that strawberries produce best in soil that is high in phosphorus and high in potash. To achieve this add some of the Evergro Fruit Tree and Berry food (4-20-20) to the soil before you plant. Strawberry plants should be spaced 18-24 inches apart. There are 2 methods that people usually use to arrange their strawberry plants:

1) The Matted Row Method

This method is usually used for June bearing varieties, though this variety can also be planted using the Hill Method. Plants are spaced 18-24 inches apart in rows 3-4 feet apart. The plants are allowed to grow runners, forming a matted row roughly 18-20 inches wide. Don't allow them to grow wider than that or you won't be able to walk between your rows.

2) The Hill Method

This method is usually used for ever bearing and day neutral varieties. Plants are grown on hills, with roughly 3-4 plant per hill and the plants are spaced a foot apart. The hill method makes pruning and weed control easier.

Caring for New Plants

In order for strawberries to get strong enough to return year after year, you need to remove the blooms and fruits from your strawberries during their first season. This is essential for the plants to get established and strong. How long you should remove the blooms depends on the variety of strawberry you are growing. June bearing varieties should have all blooms and fruits removed for the first year.

Ever bearing and Day neutral varieties should have the blossoms removed only for the first harvest season. So if you plant them in early spring, remove all the blossoms through June, but you can allow the plants to grow a harvest in the fall. If you plant your strawberries in the fall, you should remove all blooms until the following spring, and then allow the plants to have a spring harvest.

Monitoring Runner Growth

After the plants are established, the next step is to monitor the growth of runners. Runners are sent out by the adult plant, take hold of the soil, and eventually grow into new plants. An adult plant can easily send out 4-8 runners per plant per season, depending of the variety you are growing.

The important things to monitor are the spacing of the runners and the quantity of runners. Runners should be spaced far enough apart to have room to develop into an adult plant. The rule of thumb is to allow no more than 5 plants per square foot. So be sure to separate the runners and space them out appropriately.

Fertilizing

You should fertilize your strawberries 3 times each season by side dressing them with a balanced fertilizer. You can use an all purpose organic fertilizer like Gaia (4-4-4) or Evergro Fruit Tree and Berry Food (4-20-20). Fertilize the plants once in the spring as the plants start to develop. Fertilize a second time when blooms start to appear and then a third time in August or September.

Mulching

Strawberry roots are shallow and need to be kept cool during the heat of summer. The best way to do this is to apply 1-2 inches of mulch every spring and fall. You can use our organic Sea Soil or Soil Energizer for this mulching.

Harvesting Strawberries

Strawberries are ready to harvest when they are bright red and firm. Strawberries do not continue to ripen once they are removed from the plant, so take care not to harvest them too early. When you harvest your strawberries pinch the stems and leave the cap and a ½ inch portion of stem attached to each berry.

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