

Growing Strawberries

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The Strawberry is the best-adapted fruit crop for the home gardener. Plants require little space in the garden, begin full fruiting in the year after planting and produce a high-value crop of good quality. One cup of fresh berries supplies more than the minimum daily requirements of vitamin C.

Site Selection and Soil Preparation

Like most fruit crops, selecting a good site is the major decision which will determine the productivity of your planting. Strawberries should be planted in full sunlight. In addition, the site selected should be well-drained. Standing water in the springtime is the major cause of plant loss in all fruit crops. Consequently, locations that have standing water in the springtime should be avoided. Strawberries should not be planted in areas where strawberries, tomatoes, peppers or eggplants were grown during the previous season. Avoiding these areas will minimize the chance of plant diseases infecting your new planting. The soil pH should be adjusted to between 6.0-6.5 prior to planting. Potassium and phosphorous recommendations for your garden can be made by our county Extension agent.

Plant Culture

For many home gardeners, the culture of strawberry plants is misunderstood since they have an unusual growth habit. Although strawberry is a perennial, its culture is simple and easy to master. Plants are usually set during spring. Plants should be set at the proper depth in the garden. Spacing of 3 to 4 feet are usually chosen between rows, and 2 feet between plants in the row. Water the plants immediately after they are set. During the first summer, pinch blossoms off the newly-set plants and allow them to runner freely to form a matted row. The matted row should be kept to about 18 inches in width. In no case should the matted row be allowed to become wider than 24 inches. Keeping the rows at 18 inches can be done by mowing, hand-hoeing or cultivation. After harvest, renovate the bed to invigorate the plants. The major limitation to plant growth and yield in strawberries is weed competition. Consequently, it is suggested that hand-weeding in the beds, rototilling between beds and mulching be used to control weeds. Mulching with 2-3 inches of weed-free straw in the fall aids in weed control and minimizes winter injury. Rake the mulch off the plants early in the following spring.

Insect and Disease Control

Despite the vigor and disease resistance of most strawberry varieties, problems occasionally develop in the planting. Typically slugs, clippers, sap beetles, spittlebugs and berry rots can cause problems. If you need information on insect and disease problems, contact your local Extension office.



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