

## Strawberries

Strawberries can be grown in rows or hills in the garden, or in raised beds or containers. The ease of growing, and plentiful fruit make strawberries essential to your edible garden. Make sure to check out books and websites for detailed cultural methods. Two dozen plants produce enough fruit for a family of four. There are three types of strawberry plants.

- **June-bearing** plants produce fruit the second year after planting and only in the late May/June season. This variety produces large crops of excellent quality berries. Like to send out runners in late summer growth spurt.
- **Everbearing** strawberries produce a large crop of berries in the early season, then a smaller crop in early fall. Everbearers also produce a crop the first year usually late in season. These spread much less, making Ever-bearers good for smaller containers and spaces.
- **Day-neutral** strawberries produce berries all season long. They are very productive and will give fruit the first year of planting. They are sensitive and harder to grow than the June or Ever-bearers. They are compact plants with few runners.

Plant in spring, in full sun and a well-drained soil, high in organic matter. Much of Columbus has very heavy clay soil which and suffocate plant roots and cause wet soils, so incorporating lots of peat moss, compost, leaves and other organic matter into the soil to loosen it up and drain water properly is very important.

Place plants 18" apart in rows 30-36" apart. Very important! Position the plant so crown is level with ground and spread out roots in planting hole. Planting the crown too deep will cause rot and disease problems. Carefully cover all roots, leaving crown at soil level. Mulch to preserve soil moisture and prevent weeds.

In the first year, remove all flower blossoms to strengthen the plants (June-bearing). Keep your rows weed-free and the soil moisture high. Apply 3" of mulch in late fall for winter insulation. Remove mulch in spring. Apply an organic granular fertilizer in early spring or incorporate rotted manure each year to maintain fertility.

Diseases can be troublesome, specially during rainy periods. A layer of mulch will keep plants from sitting in mud . When watering, do so in the morning so plants dry before evening. Too thick a layer of straw mulch tends to encourage slugs, which can damage the fruit. Many gardeners use black plastic for a mulch material.

Birds and critters can ravage your strawberries. If a problem, cover with bird netting when the fruit get close to ripening.



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## Strawberries, cont'd

### Varieties

**June-bearing:** Allstar: midseason, very productive, superior variety.

Earliglow: early season. Small to medium berries of excellent quality.

Del Marvel: Improved Surecrop. Disease resistant. Large fruit.

Primetime: Improved Guardian. Midseason. Disease resistant. Very vigorous.

Honeoye: midseason. Large fruit on vigorous, heavily matted plants.

**Everbearing:** Fort Laramie: Sweet high quality berries on vigorous plants

Ozark Beauty: Large sweet berries which are good for freezing. Vigorous, productive.

Quinault: Large berries.

**Day-Neutral:** Tristar: Productive, hardy and vigorous. Sweet, good flavored berries.

Pick strawberries in the cool and dewy morning, and immediately put them in the refrigerator. Wait until just before you eat or cook them to rinse the berries thoroughly with cool water. Extra strawberries can be frozen, dried, or made into jam or preserves.

Hit the internet for loads more information.

SMALL FRUITS