

Growing Strawberries

Information from ohioline.osu.edu
Factsheet HFG 1424-98

Strawberries are well suited for the home garden since they produce fruits very quickly, and require a relatively small amount of space. Each plant may produce up to one quart of fruit during the first fruiting year. Twenty-five plants will normally produce enough strawberries for an average sized family. Production usually declines during the second and third years of fruiting; a new planting should be established after plants produce fruits for more than 3 to 4 years.

June-Bearers vs. Ever bearing Types

Strawberry plants may be of two major types, June-bearing or Ever-Bearing. In Ohio, the ripening season of June-bearing strawberry cultivars ranges from late May to the end of June. June-bearing types are most popular for their flavor and quality. One cannot tell by looking at the plant whether they are of the day-neutral or June-bearing type; therefore, when purchasing plants, it is important to specify which type is desired. It is certainly a good idea to plant both types to get fruit production in the first year from ever-bearing strawberries, and high yield and quality from June-bearing strawberries.

Site Requirements Strawberry plants require full sun for the maximum yield and the best quality. Best results are obtained when the plants are grown in

loose, fertile soils containing large quantities of organic matter. The soil should be slightly acidic, having a pH of 5.8 to 6.5. Lime and fertilizers should be applied to soils according to [soil test results](#).

The strawberry plant is sensitive to excessive soil moisture. Strawberries should be planted in raised beds or on ridges if drainage is a problem. Also, avoid planting strawberry plants in areas where potatoes, tomatoes, or sod were grown recently. Insect and disease problems may result in serious plant damage in such areas.

Planting and Spacing Early spring is the best time to plant strawberry plants as long as soil is not too wet. Fall planting is not recommended because plants can be injured by soil heaving (alternate freezing and thawing). Strawberry plants have roots, a crown, and leaves. The crown is a short stem between the roots and leaves.

When planting, make sure to cover the roots and only half of the crown with soil. Make a trench deep enough to set the roots vertically. Do not bend roots horizontally.

June-bearing plants are spaced 12 to 24 inches apart. On close-spaced plants, runners are controlled by removing unwanted runners during the first season. In August, rows should be 18 to 24 inches wide with plants 6 to 8 inches apart in the row. Generally rows are 36 to 40 inches apart.

For everbearing strawberries, plants are set 8 to 12 inches apart in the row with 30 to 36 inches between rows. Remove runners throughout the first season and remove

flowers for the first 6 weeks after planting. Mulch the planting with 3 to 4 inches of straw or wood chips to conserve moisture. Mechanical cultivation and mulches are recommended for weed control.

Fertilizers Apply nutrients and lime (if needed) prior to planting according to soil test results. Apply a 10-10-10 or 13-13-13 fertilizer 7 to 10 days after planting, again in mid-June if rainfall has been excessive and again in mid-August.

Blossom Removal Remove the flower stalks of June-bearing strawberry plants as they appear throughout the first growing season. More production can be expected if the plants are allowed to attain large size before fruiting. Remove the blossoms of everbearing types of plants as they appear until about the middle of June (first year only). Then allow flowers to set fruit for harvest during the remainder of the season.

Irrigation Additional watering is needed during dry seasons. Plants require 1 inch to 1.5 inches of water per week from mid-June to mid-August. Take care in watering so that the soil does not remain soggy for any prolonged period.

Renovation of Strawberries After Harvest Strawberry plants can be fruited more than one year but probably not for more than three harvest seasons, depending on the vigor and number of plants. June-bearing strawberries should be renovated every year right after harvest if one desires excellent fruit

production for more than one year.

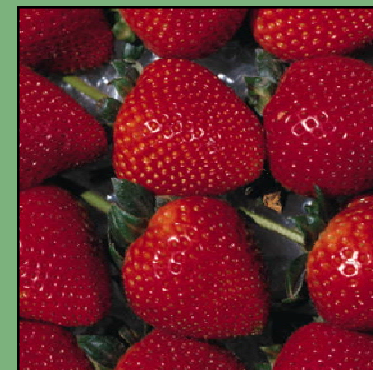
First control weeds by mechanical means or labeled herbicides. Remove all old leaves with a mower or a sickle. Make sure to set the mower as high as the blade will go to avoid injuring plant crowns. Narrow the rows to a width of about 12 inches by cultivating between them with a rotary tiller. Thin the plants within each row, leaving 4 to 6 inches between plants. Topdress beds with 0.5 to 1 inch of soil. Broadcast 2.5 pounds of 10-10-10 fertilizer per 100 square feet of planting. Apply 1 inch of water each week to promote growth if it does not rain.

Insect and Disease Control Many problems can be avoided by selecting sites where sod, tomatoes, or potatoes have not been recently grown; planting disease-free and disease-resistant plants and using good cultural practices.

Winter Mulching In addition to weed control, mulching is necessary to provide winter protection for the plants. Apply straw two to three inches deep over the plants after they have been subjected to several sharp freezes in the low 30s or high 20s in fall. This is generally between November 15 and 30, but no later than December 15.

Frost Protection Strawberry flower buds are very susceptible to spring frosts. Mulches used for winter protection should be pulled from plants in early spring, before there is much leaf yellowing. The mulch should be left between rows to cover blossoms in the spring when frost is predicted, especially with early cultivars.

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