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# How to Grow Strawberry Plants: The Complete Guide



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Botanical Name:  
*Fragaria*  
*vesca* L.  
*a spp.*

Plant Type:  
[Fruit](#)

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# Planting, Growing, and Harvesting Strawberries

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You'll never find that sweet strawberry taste as good as the one you've grown yourself or picked from a farm. Why? The sugar in berries converts to starch soon after they're picked. Learn more about how to grow strawberries in your garden or containers.

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## About Strawberry Plants

Garden strawberries are typically much sweeter and juicier than those found in grocery stores. They are also perennials, so they'll come back year after year! Plus,

soil, from garden beds to pots to hanging baskets.

## Strawberry Plants Come in Four Types

- **June-bearing strawberries bear fruit in one go, usually over a period of three weeks.** The berries tend to be larger. Despite their name, you can choose from early-, mid-, and late-season varieties that fruit anytime from early to late summer.
- **Everbearing strawberries (also called perpetual or all-season strawberries) produce steadily throughout the summer and even into autumn.** They have smaller berries and are great for making jam or freezing.
- **Day-neutral strawberries (closely related to everbearers) also produce fruit continuously throughout the season.** Insensitive to day length, these varieties produce buds, fruits, and runners continuously if the tempera-

of June-bearers.

- **Alpine Strawberries:** In a little world of their own are the alpine and wild strawberries. These are much smaller plants that form far smaller berries, but they have an almost impossibly intense flavor – perfect for topping your morning cereal, for example! They require less attention than bigger strawberry plants and, once established, will pretty much look after themselves, making an attractive edging plant or even growing out from the cracks or walls.  
They will naturally self-seed to create a useful edible ground cover.

For the home garden, we recommend **June-bearers**. Although you will have to wait a year for fruit harvesting, it will be well worth it.

Summer-Fruiting / June-Bearing	Everbearing / Perpetual	Day-Neutral
Short, intense	Small flushes	Steady pro-

Fruits in the summer	Fruits from summer to autumn	Fruits from summer to autumn
Vigorous runner production	Fewer runners	Moderate runner production

Read Next

- [Strawberry Varieties and Growing Tips](#)
- [Unusual Fruit and Fruit Trees to Grow](#)
- [How to Grow Raspberries: The Complete Guide](#)

# PLANTING

Strawberry plants require 6 to 10 hours of direct sunlight a day, so choose a sunny spot. Otherwise, strawberries are tolerant of different soil types, although they prefer loamy soil that drains well.

## Preparing the Soil for Strawberries

To ensure a strong start, add a few buckets of well-rotted manure before planting;

into raised mounds to further improve drainage. If your soil is sandy, simply cultivate lightly to remove weeds and mix in a 1-inch layer of rich compost or rotted manure.

Soil pH should be between 5.5 and 7. If necessary, [amend your soil](#) before planting. If soils in your area are naturally alkaline, it is best to grow strawberries in half-barrels or other large containers filled with compost-enriched potting soil. [Raised beds](#) are a particularly good option for strawberry plants.

Practice crop rotation for the most success. Unless you plan to amend your soil each year, do not plant in a site that recently had [tomatoes](#), [peppers](#), or [egg-plant](#).

## ADVERTISEMENT

Also, note that strawberries and garlic are good [planting companions](#) if you wish to interplant. Garlic helps deter pests like spider mites.


## When to Plant Strawberries

- Plan to plant when the ground can be worked in the spring. [See your local frost dates](#).
- Establish new plants each year to maintain high berry quality each season. Strawberry plants will produce runners (daughter plants) that root and grow into new strawberry plants.
- Buy disease-resistant plants from a reputable nursery, of a variety that is recommended in your area. You can consult with the nursery you buy them from or with your state [Cooperative Extension service](#) for locally recommended varieties.
- You can buy strawberries in pots, but also you can sometimes find bare-root.



look fairly shocking, without any leaves  
and rather scraggly, but don't let that  
put you off. Once they hit the soil,  
they'll be well away!

**Make the Most of Your Available Space**  
See how many plants will fit and which crops can occupy the same space in your garden at different times of the year.



Strawberry (9 plants) - row length: 17' 11"

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## How to Plant Strawberries

- Provide adequate space for sprawling.  
Allow for spacing of around 18 inches (1-1/2 feet) to leave room for runners and leave 4 feet between rows. Strawberries are sprawling plants. Seedlings will send out runners, which, in turn, will send out their own runners. (Container strawberries can be planted closer together.)
- Plant holes should be deep and wide enough to accommodate the entire root system without bending it. However, don't plant too deep! The roots should be covered, but the crown should be right at the soil surface. It is very important that you do

leaves, flowers, and fruit must be exposed to light and fresh air.

- To settle their roots into the soil, water plants well at the time of planting.
- Use a mulch of the strawberry's name-sake – straw!
- It is also possible to grow strawberries from last year's runners. [See this video to find out how.](#)

## Planting Strawberries in Containers

Potted strawberries are easy to get right. They go in at the same depth as the potting mix in the container, but for bare-rooted plants, make sure you don't go too deep or too shallow. If too deep, the plant may struggle and could potentially rot away. If it is too shallow, it will rock about and dry out really easily, creating a weak and brittle plant. You want the crown of the plant where the stems of the leaves emerge to be ever so slightly proud of the soil surface. [Learn more about growing strawberries in pots.](#)

**or containers.**

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## **GROWING**

### **How to Grow Strawberries**

establishing their roots and during dry weather. Moisture is incredibly important due to its shallow roots. Water adequately, about one inch per square foot per week. Strawberry plants need a lot of water when the runners and flowers are developing and again in the late summer when the plants are fully mature and gearing up for winter dormancy.

- Keep strawberry beds mulched to reduce water needs and weed invasion. Any type of mulch—from black plastic to pine straw to shredded leaves—will keep the soil moist and the plants clean. [Read more about mulching.](#)
- Be diligent about weeding—weed by hand, especially in the first months after planting.
- Once strawberries flower, fertilize them with a high-potassium, liquid tomato feed to encourage good fruit production. Plants also benefit from the addition of an organic, general-purpose fertilizer early in spring, as they set into growth, to help power

fruiting. If not allowed to bear fruit, they will spend their food reserves on developing healthy roots instead, which is a good thing. The yields will be much greater in the second year.

- Eliminate runner plants as needed. First and second generations produce higher yields. Try to keep daughter plants spaced about 10 inches apart.
- Row covers are a good option for protecting blossoms and fruit from birds.



*Photo by Yuriy S./Getty Images*

## Winter Care of Strawberries

Strawberry plants are perennial. They are naturally cold-hardy and will survive mildly freezing temperatures. So, if your area has mild winters, little care is needed.

(Fahrenheit), strawberries will be in their dormant stage. It's best to provide some winter protection:

- When the growing season is over, mow or cut foliage down to one inch. This can be done after the first couple of frosts or when air temps reach 20°F (-6°C).
- Mulch plants about 4 inches deep with straw, pine needles, or other organic material.
- In even colder regions, more insulating mulch should be added.
- Natural precipitation should appropriately maintain sufficient soil moisture.
- Remove mulch in early spring after the danger of frost has passed.

## How to Propagate Strawberries

Strawberries produce long, wiry stems called runners with little plantlets along them. You can use these to grow more strawberries by just pinning the plantlets down to the root and then severing them

[more strawberries!](#)

## Types

Try planting more than one variety. Each will respond differently to conditions, and you will have various fruits to enjoy.

- **‘Northeast’** is best suited for the northeastern US and southeastern Canada. Fruit has strong flavor and aroma.
- **‘Sable’** is hardy to zone 3, early season, great flavor.
- **‘Primetime’** is a mild-flavored, disease-resistant variety, best adapted to the Mid-Atlantic.
- **‘Cardinal’** is a good variety to try in the South.
- **‘Camarosa’** is a good variety to try on the West Coast.
- **‘Tristar’** is a day-neutral variety that’s very well-suited for hanging baskets.

[Learn more about choosing and growing different strawberry varieties.](#)

# HARVESTING

## How to Harvest Strawberries

- When you grow your own, you can peak at the peak of ripeness. No more white strawberries! Harvest only fully red (ripe) berries, and pick every three days.
- Fruit is typically ready for harvesting 4 to 6 weeks after blossoming.
- Ideally, pick fruits in the warmth of the afternoon for maximum flavor.
- Cut by the stem; do not pull the berry, or you could damage the plant.
- For June-bearer strawberries, the harvest will last up to 3 weeks. Depending on the variety, you should have an abundance of berries.

## How to Store Strawberries

- Store unwashed berries in the refrigerator for 3 to 5 days.
- Strawberries can be frozen whole for about 2 months.
- Dehydrate them or turn them into de-





Photo by Ben Shuchunke/Getty Images

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## PESTS/DISEASES

- [Gray Mold](#)
- [Powdery Mildew](#)
- [Japanese Beetles](#)

## Pest-Beating Tips

- Watch out for birds! Netting is one option to physically keep them off developing fruits; make sure it's in place before the fruits start to swell and color up.
- The other pest to watch out for is slugs. Set up slug traps among your plants or, for more organic slug-control tips, use beer traps. Spread sand over the strawberry bed to deter slugs (This also works well for [lettuce](#)). Pine needles also foil slug and pillbug damage.
- For bigger bugs such as Japanese beetles, spray your plants with puréed garlic and neem seed oil.
- The other thing to watch out for is frost early on in the season when plants are flowering. Strawberries are super-hardy, but if a frost gets at the flowers, they'll turn to a blackened mush and won't be viable. So, cover flowering plants with [row covers](#) or cloches should a frosty night threaten.

## Why Are Strawberries Called Strawberries?

One theory is that woodland pickers strung them on pieces of straw to carry them to market. Others believe that the surface of the fruit looks as if it's embedded with bits of straw. Others think that the name comes from the Old English word meaning "to strew" because the plant's runners stray in all directions and look as if they are strewn on the ground.

The [June full Moon is called the Strawberry Moon](#) because when this Moon appeared, it signaled that it was time to start gathering ripening fruit.

## RECIPES

**PRIZEWINNING STRAWBERRY  
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**STRAWBERRY-RHUBARB PIE**

**STRAWBERRY CREPES****STRAWBERRY LEMONADE****FRUIT**

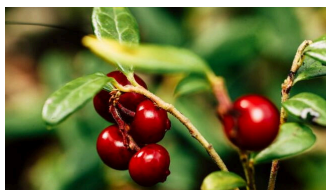
## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

### Catherine Boeckmann



Catherine Boeckmann loves nature, stargazing, and gardening so it's not surprising that she and The Old Farmer's Almanac found each other. She leads digital content for the Almanac website, and is also a certified master gardener in the state of Indiana. [Read More from Catherine Boeckmann](#)

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## COMMENTS

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**Frank E & Beli... (not verified)** 2 years ago

Hi I have a question. For 2 years I had nice strawberries plants in a raised bed, I never cut them back . We put straw over the beds for the winter. Well, we took the straws off and I don't have any plants. It look like something went under the hay( straw) ate the greens off it all. I hope the roots are still there. There is no hole in the ground. Can you tell me what happened? There are no greens or dead leaves either; they're gone and eaten off. I just see soil.

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[REPLY](#)

**Collin (not verified)** 4 months 1 week ago

I needed to thank you for this very good read!! I absolutely enjoyed every little bit of it.

I have got you book-marked to check

My blog; Live Hongkong Pools

**REPLY**

**Louise (not verified)** 1 year ago

Came home to deer eating my strawberry plants, the whole plant and not just the ones with berries!

**REPLY**

**The Editors** 2 years ago

Hi Frank, Sorry to hear about your strawberry crop. That must have been a disappointing discovery. While most of the pests that harm strawberry plants are insects, they would not have eaten the plants down to the soil. You certainly had some hungry (and stealth) critters around your property that took an extreme liking to your strawberry plants. Whether your crowns remain in tact for future growth or you plant new strawberries

rier around your raised beds as  
a deterrent.

While this does not sound like the  
case with your strawberries, since  
you said that you never cut back your  
strawberries, this is a good opportu-  
nity to mention that after harvesting  
your crop, it is best to cut back the  
foliage to 1-inch above the ground.  
This helps to remove older leaves that  
could be infected with diseases and  
control insects by removing their  
food source and potential  
breeding sites.

**REPLY**

---

**ane (not verified)** 3 years 11 months ago

It is funny that altho I have a compulsion to put  
things in rows and keep everything to a mini-  
mum, I don't plant that way. Why? Because na-  
ture doesn't plant that way. I have waist high  
planters and 16 inch pots that hold everything.  
My strawberries had the last three months in



sent to the back deck soon as the old tree in the front has decided to spread more this year. They are crowded, no mulch, and producing like they are very happy. I don't keep the runners cause they are not as vigorous as the mother plants and over time will revert to the original berry species. But they do look pretty hanging over the side of the pot. It's funny how all the sites say the same thing, I have never paid attention and currently have enough strawberries to make a pie with rhubarb I found at the local market... these are day neutral...good times

**REPLY**

---

**john nashman (not verified)** 4 years ago

i grow hydroponically everything from tomatoes to lettuce in perlite with nutrients can you grow strawberry's in perlite

**REPLY**

Can I grow the runners indoors once I've cut them off? If so, how? Hydroponics or planted? They don't have time to establish roots outdoors and I hate to waste the 20 baby plants. ALL have large nodes for roots.

**REPLY**

**Kathy (not verified)** 1 year 5 months ago

Yes you can plant runners indoors in in pots until you can put them outside. Depending on your type of plant, it may continue to bloom and grow berries. I had a new deck built, strawberries were growing around support posts and had to be removed during construction. I removed and potted all. Put a baby runner in a single pot and the remaining bunch of plants in a huge pot. All are indoor since construction continued into December. I'm hoping all survive

everbearing plant. It's continuing to ripen fruit in front of patio door. I'm amazed that the original plant and the dozen of runner plants did so well.

**REPLY**

---

**dee (not verified)** 4 years 1 month ago

My strawberry bed is over ten years old, old plants are replaced by new runners and produce nice size fruit, however two years ago I started noticing new strawberry plants but they're like wild ones. They have tiny little berries and have spread all over. I've tried pulling out those runners but can't get them all. I'm afraid they will choke out my real plants. How do I rid my garden of these wild ones?

**REPLY**

**Candace M. Williams (not**

Mulch with sand n compost covering  
the undesirable plants and leaving the  
others to thrive.

REPLY

MORE COMMENTS

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