



Growing Strawberries



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THE PLANTING SITE - *selecting and preparing*

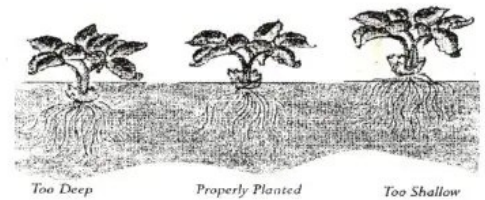
- Choose an area with rich loam or sandy loam soil. In clay soils, it is ideal to add composted mulch or organic matter to the site. Work up the area well so there is ample loose soil. Avoid poorly drained areas. Soil pH should be in the 6.5 to 6.8 range.

SPACING

- Space plants 12 to 18 inches apart. Rows are 3 to 4 inches apart. In a small bed (4x8 ft.) you can use equidistant spacing and plant as close as 12 inches apart.
- 18" x 42" spacing = 8,325 plants per acre; 24" x 42" spacing = 6,225 plants per acre; 18" x 48" spacing = 5,425 plants per acre

PLANTING

- Plants can be kept moist if you are not ready to plant immediately. Keep moist during planting. Extra long roots can be trimmed down to 5 or 6 inches with a scissors rather than curling them up into the planting hole.
- Do not plant too deep. Tamp soil firmly around the plant. Water well at planting



IRRIGATION

- Newly established strawberry plants need continued moisture all summer long.

FERTILIZING

- Do not fertilize at planting. In July or August following planting, apply foliar fertilizer or 1/2 lb. of 10-10-10 fertilizer (or equivalent) per 100 sq. ft. The 2nd year use foliar fertilizer or 1 to 1 1/2 lbs. of 10-10-10 per 100 sq. ft. applied during July or August. We recommend top-dressing with composted manures or working in compost into the top 3 inches of the soil.

WEED CONTROL

- After planting, remove weeds by cultivating weekly. Don't allow weeds to compete with the new plants.

MULCHING

- Mulching is necessary, especially in northern states. Mulch keeps fruit clean, conserves moisture, and suppresses weeds. Straw is ideal. Avoid wet, heavy, or decaying mulch. After several hard frosts in fall, apply a layer of straw directly over the plants. A few plant leaves may still be visible. In spring, uncover plants, raking straw into the aisles.

CARING FOR YOUR STRAWBERRY PLANTING

THE FIRST SEASON

- **REMOVING BLOSSOMS.** Most plants will form blossoms within the first month after they are planted. Removing the entire active blossoms and the stem where they are attached will allow the plants to become better established. June bearing varieties should not be permitted to bear fruit the first summer. Day neutrals can start producing the first fall. The day neutral blossoms should be left to mature on the mother plants after the first of July. We let plants bear fruit the first year. This reduces 2nd year crop somewhat, but we think it's worth it. Less work, and it evens itself out.



MAINTAINING WEED CONTROL

- The primary work of a new strawberry patch is to keep it free of weed competition. Herbicides, hand hoeing, or mechanical cultivation is needed.

ROW SYSTEMS

- **PLASTICULTURE.** Setting the plants on strips of plastic eliminates the need of intense weed control. On the other hand, runner control and irrigation are then considered more involving. It is best to keep all runners removed in such a system. Only the mother plant is used for production. Plants need to be much closer together when no runners are being established.
- **MATTED ROWS.** Runner establishment is essential in a matted row system. Runners are randomly spaced or simply allowed to fill the row with young plants. More production and larger berries can be developed by carefully spacing and limiting the amount of runners to 6 or less per plant. You can keep a bed probably year after year by renewing the bed. The best way to do this is by tilling in the row where mother plants were originally planted after 3 years. Each year thereafter, till in the area next to that, giving the youngest plants an opportunity to grow freely.



FEEDING OR FERTILIZING

- **FALL FERTILIZER.** Late summer (early August - early September) are important periods to fertilize for blossom development in next spring's crop. Irrigate after applying fertilizer or spread it just before a rain. Fertilization during dry, hot weather with no irrigation can seriously damage plants.

WINTER PROTECTION

- **STRAW COVER.** Use clean wheat straw for the ultimate winter cover protection. Apply just enough to create a complete layer over the plants and the row middles. A 1 to 2 inch thickness is sufficient. Apply when the plants are dormant (leaves start to discolor). Usually around Thanksgiving Day.
- Remove slightly, or part way, the heaviest part of the straw over the top of the plants in the spring. It is important to allow enough straw cover for the plants to grow through it and develop most of the berries on top of the straw mulch. This assures in having less fungal diseases and much cleaner fruit.

