

Growing Strawberries BC

Strawberries are one of the best plants to start with if you're new to growing your own food.

They're small, easy to care for, and incredibly satisfying — there's nothing quite like eating a berry you grew yourself. You don't even need a garden: strawberries grow happily in pots, planters, and hanging baskets.

Here's everything you need to know to get started.

STEP 1: PICK THE RIGHT TYPE OF STRAWBERRY

There are three types of strawberries, and choosing the right one makes a big difference.

June-Bearing — These produce one big harvest in June or early July. The berries tend to be large and very flavourful — great for eating fresh, freezing, or making jam. If you want a bumper crop all at once, this is your type. Good BC varieties: All Star, Eclair, Honeoye.

Everbearing (also called Day-Neutral) — These produce a steady stream of berries from early summer right through to fall frost. Not as many at once, but you'll be picking regularly for months. These are the best choice for containers and hanging baskets. Good varieties: Eversweet, Berries Galore, Seascape, Tristar, Albion.

Alpine — Small berries with big flavour. These are the most hands-off of the three and will even grow in shady spots. A great choice if you don't have a sunny garden.

Not sure which to choose? Everbearing varieties are the most beginner-friendly — you'll get fruit in your first year and they work in almost any space.

STEP 2: CHOOSE A GOOD SPOT

Strawberries are pretty adaptable, but they do best with:

- **Lots of sun** — aim for at least 6 hours a day. More sun = sweeter berries.
- **Good drainage** — if water pools in your garden after rain, use a raised bed or container instead. Strawberry roots rot quickly in soggy soil.
- **Rich soil** — mix in some compost before planting to give your plants a great start.

If you're planting in a pot, any good-quality potting mix will work. Make sure the container has drainage holes at the bottom.

STEP 3: PLANT YOUR STRAWBERRIES

When to plant: Early to mid-spring is ideal. Look for bare-root plants early in the season, or potted plants a little later — both work well.

How to plant:

1. Dig a hole and place the plant so the crown (the little nub where the leaves meet the roots) sits right at soil level — not buried, not sticking up
2. Space plants about 40 cm (16 inches) apart so they have room to spread
3. Water well right after planting
4. Spread a layer of straw around the base of each plant — this keeps moisture in, weeds down, and berries clean off the soil (fun fact: this is how strawberries got their name!)

First-year tip: If you're planting June-bearing or bare-root strawberries, pinch off any flowers that appear in the first season. It feels wrong, but it helps the plant build strong roots — and you'll get a much better harvest in year two. Everbearing varieties don't need this — go ahead and let them fruit right away.

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STEP 4: WATER CONSISTENTLY

Strawberries have shallow roots, which means they dry out faster than deeper-rooted plants. During the growing season — especially when berries are forming — check the soil every few days and water if it feels dry an inch below the surface.

Water at the base of the plant, not over the leaves. Wet foliage can lead to mould and disease.

STEP 5: FEED YOUR PLANTS

Strawberries are heavy feeders — regular fertilizing makes a real difference to the size and flavour of your fruit. We recommend GARDENWORKS 4-20-20 Fruit and Berry Food every six weeks through the growing season. This blend is specially formulated to support flowering and fruiting (rather than just producing lots of leaves).

STEP 6: AFTER HARVEST — WHAT TO DO

Once the season winds down, a bit of tidying keeps your plants healthy for next year.

- Cut back old leaves on June-bearing plants after harvest, trimming to about 10 cm (4 inches) above the crown. New leaves will grow back fresh.
- Deal with runners — strawberry plants send out long stems (called runners) that grow tiny new plants at their tips. You can tuck these into gaps in your bed to fill in bare spots, or just snip them off to keep things tidy.
- Clear away dead leaves and debris from around the base of plants — this helps prevent pests and disease from overwintering.

Most strawberry plants are at their best for about three to four years, then it's time to start fresh with new plants.

GROWING IN POTS AND CONTAINERS

No garden? No problem. Everbearing strawberries are ideal for containers — even hanging baskets. Use a pot with drainage holes, fill with good potting mix, water regularly (containers dry out faster than garden beds), and fertilize a little more often. You'll be surprised how much fruit a single well-fed pot can produce.

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COMMON QUESTIONS

When will I get strawberries?

Everbearing varieties will produce fruit in their first year, typically from July through to October. June-bearing varieties planted this spring will give you a small taste this year, but the real harvest comes next June.

How long do strawberry plants last?

About three to four years. After that, yields drop off and it's worth replanting.

Why are my berries small?

Usually one of four things: too many plants crowded together, not enough sun, irregular watering, or not enough fertilizer. Addressing any of these should help.

Can I grow strawberries in the shade?

Standard varieties need sun for the best fruit. If your garden is shady, go with Alpine strawberries — they're the most shade-tolerant type.

Do strawberries grow well in BC?

Absolutely. BC's mild, moist climate — especially in the Lower Mainland and on Vancouver Island — is ideal for strawberries. The Fraser Valley is one of Canada's top strawberry-growing regions.

QUICK REFERENCE: STRAWBERRY TYPES AT A GLANCE

Type	Harvest Time	Best For	Beginner-Friendly?
June-Bearing	June – early July	Big harvests, jam, freezing	Yes, but no fruit year one
Everbearing	July – October	Fresh eating, containers	✓ Best for beginners
Alpine	Summer – Fall	Shady spots, low maintenance	✓ Very easy

NEED HELP CHOOSING?

Visit any GARDENWORKS location in spring when strawberry plants arrive in store. Our team can help you pick the right variety for your space and get you set up for a great first harvest.

Strawberries are one of the most beginner-friendly fruit plants you can grow. Follow these steps and you'll be harvesting your own berries before you know it.