

Strawberries

There are more than 600 cultivars of strawberries that differ in flavour, size and texture but all of these heart shaped delicious fruit are packed with phytonutrients that enhance your health.

THREE MAIN GROUPS OF STRAWBERRIES

- Alpine strawberries are usually grown in shade in ornamental gardens. They need no special care & can be left to fend for themselves after planting.
- Large fruited 'June bearers' flower in the short days of late spring for crops in summer, and to a much lesser extent in autumn.
- Large fruited 'everbearing' strawberries form flower buds in summer to crop from late summer into autumn over a long period. everbearing bear fruit in regular flushes from July until the first autumn frosts.

PLANTING

Strawberry plants are cheap and easy to plant: A bed of strawberries usually lasts up to four years if planted into well-drained, fertile soil free from troublesome weeds. Strawberries can also be grown in raised beds or containers if drainage is poor.

- Plant in mid-spring.
- Remove flowers from spring-planted strawberries in the first season to encourage their roots to establish.
- Crowns (the tops of individual dormant plants) should be at soil level, 40cm apart.
- To conserve water and heat while suppressing weeds, many gardeners grow strawberries through polythene, ideally white, with black on the underside.

AFTER HARVEST

- After the final harvest of the summer, tuck spare runners (young plants that develop as offshoots from the parent) into the row to fill in gaps or replace old plants. Remove any unwanted runners.
- Some gardeners prefer a continuous row in the second and third year rather than spaced plants; the total yield may be higher, although the quality of the fruits is not so good. Whatever method used, try to keep the gap between the rows clear to get at the plants for weeding and harvest.
- Cut off the old foliage of summer bearers after cropping has finished, cutting to about 10cm (4in) above the crown to allow the new leaves to come through.
- Reduce pests and diseases by clearing away the cut foliage and any straw or other debris from around the plants.

GREAT CULTIVARS TO USE

Three excellent ever-bearing varieties started from seed and sold as actively growing plants in pots are Eversweet, Berries Galore and Temptation. All are great choices for container growing.

Favourites such as Quinalt, Ft. Laramie, Tristar, Hecker and Albion are available in early spring as bare-root divisions ready for planting, & in pots later in the season

Remember these plants need to be at their peak physical condition to produce their best fruit. Fertilize every 6wks with a fruit and berry fertilizer such as **GARDENWORKS™** 4-20-20 Fruit and Berry Food.