

Garden Update

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Growing Strawberries

Summer's first tasty bite of fresh ripe strawberries is enough to convince many to try their hand at growing this delicious fruit for themselves.

The first consideration—what type of strawberry to grow—depends on your picking preference. June-bearers produce a bounteous crop in June and July. Ever-bearers can have multiple crops depending on your location and the growing conditions—one in spring with the possibility of several more crops through the season. Day neutral strawberries like cool moist conditions and will yield fruit regularly when these conditions are met. Of these 3 types, June-bearers have the best overall yield each growing season.

Choose a reliable nursery to ensure varieties are disease-free and accurately labeled. Starter plants can be purchased in bundles of bare root dormant plants or as actively growing potted plants. Look for varieties that are not only tasty but winter hardy as well. June-bearing varieties 'Honeoye', 'Earliglow' and 'Cavendish' fulfill these requirements, while 'Ogallala' and 'Ozark Beauty' set the standard for ever-bearers. Alpine strawberries, like 'Tristar' and 'Tribute', are short-lived day neutrals.

Be sure to site the strawberry patch where it gets lots of sunlight—10 or more hours of direct, uninterrupted sunlight daily for best production. A strawberry patch located on higher ground will have less problems with late frosts and water ponding around plants. Higher ground also provides better air circulation for timely drying of leaves which will cut down on some fungal disease problems, like leaf blight and gray mold, that thrive in still air. A loamy soil with lots of organic matter will get plants off to a good start. If organic matter is lacking, work into the soil some compost, well-aged manure, leaf mold, or decomposed straw.

Space strawberry plants 18-24 inches apart in rows 3 to 4 feet apart. Strawberry flowers and groundcover growth habit means plants can also be enjoyed in an edible landscape when grown at the edges of flower beds. As a groundcover, strawberry plants may be planted in a 1 foot by 1 foot grid pattern. No matter what type of bed devised for strawberries, plants should be planted so the midpoint of the crown is even with the soil surface. Planting them too shallowly or deeply means plants will dry out or be smothered, which is not good for plant survival.

For more information on weeding, diseases, insect pests, and winter care of strawberries, follow these links: [Growing strawberries in the home garden | UMN Extension](#) and [Growing Strawberries in Wisconsin](#).