

Planting Strawberries and Care of  
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Release: Week of April 22, 2024

With gardening for food production on the rise, strawberries are one of the easiest fruits to grow. When planting strawberry plants, plant as early as possible in spring which in Nebraska is usually April.

Before planting, remove all but two or three well-developed leaves per plant, and clip off any visible flower clusters. As plants grow, continue to remove all flowers during the first year on June-bearing strawberries.

Young plants have limited energy reserves needed to establish the mother plant and produce daughter plants, offsets, during the growing season. If fruit is allowed to develop the first year, the amount of fruit produced the second year will be reduced due to smaller daughter plants being produced. It is daughter plants that bear the most fruit the next season.

Earlier, I referred to June-bearing strawberries. These are one of three types of strawberries. The others are everbearing and day neutral. While early blossoms should also be picked off of these early in the planting year, they could be allowed to produce berries later in the season.

Of the three types of strawberries, June-bearers are the best to grow in Nebraska as they produce the largest fruit and overall yield. June-bearing strawberries produce a single crop during late May and June. Plants come into full production the year after planting and usually out yield everbearing types.

For Nebraska, some early fruiting June-bearing cultivars include Earliglow and Early Red; mid-season cultivars are Chandler, Honeoye, Jewel, Surecrop, Dunlap, Red Chief, and Guardian; and later June-bearing cultivars include Robinson, Sparkle, and Bounty.

Ever-bearing strawberries do not bear fruit all summer as the name suggests. They produce two small crops. One in June and a second in late summer. High temperatures and moisture stress often reduce yield and quality of the second crop of everbearing cultivars such as Ogallala and Ft. Laramie.

Day neutral strawberries have the potential to produce fruit throughout the growing season; however, they stop flower bud initiation when temperatures are above 85 degrees F. Since this occurs often in Nebraska, day neutral cultivars like Tristar and Tribute are not the best choice for our area.

You will have good success with strawberries if the location they're planted in has full sun and the soil is well drained. If you are still preparing to plant, incorporate some compost into the soil prior to planting to increase organic matter and improve drainage.

Because strawberries are perennial broadleaf plants, there are few herbicides that will selectively control weeds without harming strawberries. For weed control, use a two inch layer of mulch like dried grass clippings or shredded wood mulch and hand weed or carefully hoe as needed.

Strawberries need a uniformly moist soil but will not tolerate wet roots. This is why a well-drained soil is important. When watering, avoid keeping the soil wet or saturated but don't allow the soil to dry out too much between irrigation. A water-soluble fertilizer can be applied to individual plants as they are planted or soon after.

For more information on growing strawberries, go to [extensionpubs.unl.edu](http://extensionpubs.unl.edu) and search for strawberries.