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## Strawberry Planting and Care

**No edible garden should be without at least a small patch of strawberries. What would summer be without garden-fresh strawberry shortcake, or the simple pleasure of a sun-warmed berry eaten straight off the plant?**

### Strawberry Categories

**Everbearing strawberries** (also known as Day-Neutral) flower and set fruit with little regard for day length. Because of this trait, they begin producing in their first year, offering a light crop in June followed by a main, ongoing crop from mid-summer through fall frost (exact fruiting pattern depends on the variety). If what you crave is a handful of fresh berries for your cereal on a regular basis, this is the type for you.

**June-bearing strawberries** produce one crop per year, in spring or early summer. These varieties are the best choices for preserving or freezing, as you get all your fruit at once. Generally speaking, June-bearing varieties have the best flavor, but the everbearing varieties we sell give them a run for their money.

### Strawberry Culture & Care

**Planting:** Strawberries like well-drained soil in a spot that receives full sun all day long. They will also be happier if you work some compost into the planting site.

Trim roots of each bare-root strawberry plant back to 4-5" before planting. Form a firm cone of soil in the center of each planting hole. Arrange the plant's roots over and around the cone. The plant's crown (the area out of which the leaves and root grow) should be at soil level, or slightly above, so adjust the height of the cone accordingly. Fill in the rest of the planting hole with soil, and water to settle it in. Add more soil if necessary.

- **Plant June bearing strawberries** 15-24" apart within a row (with rows 36-42" apart). Allow runners to fill in bare spaces until the row is 14-18" wide. Cut off any additional runners.
- **Plant everbearing strawberries** 10-18" apart. With 10" spacing, remove all runners as they form. With 18" spacing, hand set one runner between the mother plants. For best plant health and fruit production, no two plants should be closer than 7-8" apart.

**Fertilizing:** Strawberries are not heavy feeders. Apply cottonseed meal to the soil before planting, following the recommended rates on the package.

**Water:** During our dry summer months, supplemental water is important for increased plant vigor and fruit production. The most crucial times to water are:

- Before and during harvest (to ensure good fruit size)
- In late summer, as flower buds form

It is best to avoid overhead watering during the bloom period, as this can contribute to fruit rot later. Consider using a soaker hose or other drip irrigation.

**Diseases:** *Root rot* can be a problem in poorly drained soils. If you have this problem, you must remove the infected planting and re-establish a new strawberry bed in a better-draining location. *Botrytis gray mold* affects blossoms and fruit, producing fuzzy gray fungal growth. To control, maintain good air circulation between plants, limit overhead watering from bloom through harvest, and harvest fruit every day. Fungicides appropriate for strawberries are also available.

**Maintenance:** June-bearing strawberries benefit greatly from annual renewal. After final harvest, cut off all foliage, or run over the bed with a lawn mower set on high (so as not to damage the plant crowns). Water and fertilize to encourage new growth. You can also reduce a thick planting at this time by removing the "mother" plants, leaving the newer "daughter" plants.

## Everbearing Varieties for 2005

**Quinalt:** This born-and-bred Washington variety offers large, firm, deep red berries with good flavor. Great choice for fresh eating, desserts and preserves. Not recommended for freezing. High-yielding, vigorous plants produce many runners. This variety is too soft to be transported and sold in stores, so if you want it, you'll have to grow your own!

**Tribute:** Produces medium-to-large wedge shaped berries with firm, bright red skin and light-to-medium colored flesh. Slightly-acidic, pleasant flavor that is best for fresh eating and of good processing quality.

**Tri Star:** Produces a heavy, very early spring crop of small-to-medium fruit, with a heavier fall crop (cool fall weather will bring larger, more elongated fruit). Berries have firm, glossy, deep red skin with solid, medium-red flesh. Excellent flavor, wonderful aroma. Great for fresh eating or freezing. The medium-size plants have a moderate number of runners, which will bloom and bear fruit before they are rooted (this makes Tri Star a good candidate for hanging baskets). Mildew resistant.

## June-Bearing Varieties for 2005

**Benton:** Released from Benton County, Oregon. This variety is great for all parts of the Pacific Northwest. Medium-to-large, conical shape, brightly colored berries have very good flavor. It is a vigorous grower with proven winter hardiness and excellent keeping quality.

**Hood:** Large, conical, glossy bright red fruit has a fine, sweet flavor and is wonderful for jam or fresh eating (not the best choice for freezing). One of the earlier spring-bearers, and a great choice for the Northwest. Vigorous and resistant to root rot, mildew and Red Steele. Great for the home garden!

**Rainier:** This Washington-grown variety is one of the best bets for the home garden, with its excellent fruit quality and disease resistance. Medium-to-large, fairly soft berries are great for eating fresh or processing. The vigorous plants have large, floppy leaves that are quite attractive.

**Redcrest:** A processing berry high in acid, which improves quality and color in jams and jellies. The fruit is red all the way through, and is an acceptable freezer berry.

**Shuksan:** In late June, Shuksan produces large, glossy, bright red fruit with slightly indented, yellowish-red seeds and tasty, medium-firm flesh. Good for fresh eating, excellent for freezing. The large, vigorous plants are very hardy, tolerant of less-than-perfect drainage, and virus and root rot resistant.