



Strawberries

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Ideal Growing Conditions: Sandy to sandy loam soil, low in salinity with no insects or diseases, moderate temperatures, plants on beds. Use high-fertility amendments with lots of organic matter.

Planting: Set plants 4-6 inches apart to achieve maximum plant size. Add slow release or organic fertilizer. Ensure that the roots are straight and well spread in hole, with the crown at soil level. Cover with one inch of soil pressed down; water to settle soil around roots. Mulch with straw, sawdust, compost, wood chips, or grass clippings with no weed seeds. Mulch keeps the berries cleaner, maintains even humidity, and eliminates weed competition for nutrients.

Irrigation: Use overhead sprinklers for first irrigation, drip later – 1-2 inches per week during the growing and fruiting season. Keep moisture off plants after the first irrigation. Always maintain even soil moisture; avoid soggy soil.

Fertilization: Make first application six weeks after planting; may need additional applications throughout the growing season. Remove runners so energy will go into plant growth and fruit production, and remove flowers during January and February. **Always remove overripe and rotten berries**, which are sources of disease.

Pests:

Lygus Bugs cause misshapened fruit during July and August. Beneficial insects are damsel bugs and big-eyed bugs. Remove mustard, radish and wild hemlock plants since they are lygus bug hosts.

Snails and Slugs – Eliminate hiding places or plant away from them. Iron phosphate baits are chemical controls. Beer baits afford some, but not efficient, control. **Note: Metaldehyde baits are poisonous for pets and must be kept off fruit. Synthetic caffeine is toxic and should not be used as a pesticide.**

Two-Spotted Mites suck plant sap and inject toxin into plants. Light oils or insecticidal soaps are chemical controls. *Phytoseiulus persimilis*, available for purchase, is a predator for two-spotted mites. Applications should be made in January and February. Once the mite population is exhausted, the predators will starve and die out, so additional applications may be needed.

Fungal Diseases: Strawberries are susceptible to several fungal diseases, including verticillium wilt, phytophthora, powdery mildew, botrytis, and anthracnose. Mucor rot and Rhizopus are fungal diseases of strawberry fruit. Mucor causes hair-like growths on berries. It likes cool temperatures and will grow in the refrigerator. Rhizopus causes berries to break down into a juicy mess. There is no cure for either of these two diseases.

Handling of Fruit: Handle strawberry fruit carefully to avoid damage. Use solid-bottomed containers (baskets are not good because of the damage they can cause).