

Now that it's planting time for both strawberries, could you give us some tips to make sure they are planted right?

While proper planting and establishment of the strawberry transplant is the most important step of growing strawberries, it does not need to be complicated or difficult if one follows a just a few basic rules.

To start, site selection is pretty important. You will want to plant in area which doesn't have a lot of weed problems, or issues with soil diseases which can cause trouble. In particular, one wants to avoid planting strawberries in fields or gardens where tomatoes, potatoes, peppers or eggplants have been planted since these are major hosts of a wilt fungus called *Verticillium* which is devastating to strawberries. It is good too to investigate a bit and make sure that there aren't plants around which might serve as hosts for lygus bugs, mites or gophers. Lastly, one would want to make sure that the soil drains well, doesn't have an excess of salt and has good source of water.

Keep the roots of your transplants from drying out during planting and make sure the soil you are planting them into is good and wet. The plant should not be put into a hole which is too deep or too shallow, which means that to be just the right depth part of the crown (the fleshy part between the leaves and the roots) should be above the soil surface and part of it below. Additionally, the roots should extend straight down into the planting hole and not form a "J". If the roots are too long to do this properly, then they can be cut but never cut them to a length shorter than 4 inches.

Once the plant has been placed into the ground, be sure and irrigate it with abundant moisture. This will serve to keep roots moist and limit the possibility of fertilizer burn or salt from causing problems with the new plant. Lots of water (but not too much that you have standing water around the plant) will close air spaces in the soil around the plant, again preventing it from drying out excessively. One should continue to water for about four weeks to get the plants well established, and it is worth noting that if the soil dries out after those four weeks that one shouldn't hesitate to add more water.

This has been a brief guide to proper planting of strawberry transplants. Please contact Mark Bolda at UCCE Santa Cruz if you have more questions on this topic or any other topics concerning blackberry, raspberry or strawberry production.