

✧ Renee's Garden ✧

Strawberry Plants Growing Guide

There are two main types of strawberry plants:

June-bearing strawberries (Earliglow, Sparkle) produce one large crop of fruit over a period of about a month in late spring or early summer, making them ideal for freezing and preserving.

Everbearing (a.k.a. day-neutral) strawberries (Albion, Mara des Bois) produce smaller flushes of fruit throughout the entire growing season, from summer until the first heavy frost. They are perfect for snacking and desserts.

Site Selection and Soil Prep

Strawberries are adaptable to a wide variety of soil types and conditions. For best harvest, select a site that receives 6-8 hours of direct sunlight and offers excellent drainage, as strawberries do not tolerate “wet feet” or standing water. Avoid areas where you have recently grown potatoes, tomatoes, eggplants, or peppers, as these crops can harbor soil pathogens that may affect your new plants. Prepare your soil 2-3 weeks before planting by mixing in a healthy amount of compost or a half pound of organic 10-10-10 fertilizer per 100 square feet.

Planting

Plant in the spring once your soil reaches 50°F. The most critical factor for success is planting depth:

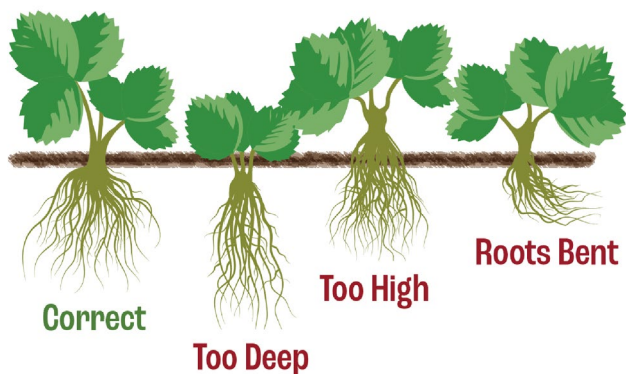
ON ARRIVAL: Your strawberry crowns will arrive in a plastic bag with a handful of moistened, shredded paper. Remove plants from their shipping box immediately but leave them in their plastic bag.

If you cannot plant right away, store in a cool, dark place for up to a week, or use a refrigerator crisper drawer for up to 2 weeks, making sure the shredded paper remains moist.

If you can't plant for more than a couple weeks but the ground isn't frozen, you can “heel them in” by planting in a shallow trench in a shaded spot outside. Cover the roots with loose soil or mulch – but not the crowns. This keeps the roots moist and protected from the sun/wind while keeping the plants dormant in the cool, outdoor air.

When you are ready to plant, soak the roots in a bucket of water for 1-2 hours to rehydrate plants and wake them from dormancy, being careful not to exceed 2 hours.

dig a hole wide enough for the roots to fan out straight down and set the plant so the middle of the crown sits perfectly level with the soil surface. Be careful not to bury the crown, as this can hamper development, or leave it too high, which can expose roots to drying out. Firm the soil gently to remove air pockets, water thoroughly, and check back after a week to ensure soil settling hasn't shifted to expose the roots.



Plant **June-bearing** strawberries (Sparkle, Earliglow) 12 to 18 inches apart in rows 3 to 4 feet wide. During their first year, you must pinch off all flower buds to force energy into the running stems that will fill the row into a dense, productive mat. By preventing the plant from fruiting in year one, you allow it to establish a massive root system and a strong crown. This sacrifice ensures a much larger, healthier harvest for the next several years.

Everbearing varieties (Albion, Mara des Bois) are ideal for small spaces and containers and should have all running stems removed throughout their life to encourage continuous fruiting. For these types, pinch off only the first flush of flowers for the first few weeks, then allow them to fruit through the autumn.

Watering and Weed Control

General care for all strawberries includes providing 1-2 inches of water weekly, preferably via drip irrigation to keep fruit and leaves dry. Consistent weeding is essential, taking care not to disturb the shallow roots or cover the crowns with soil. Mulching with clean straw, pine needles or other organic mulches will help suppress weeds, conserve moisture, and keep your ripening berries off the dirt.

Seasonal Maintenance and Renovation

For **June-bearing** beds, a process called “renovation” is required every year immediately after the final harvest. Clip the foliage to 3 inches tall, taking care not to injure the crown, and narrow the rows to 12-18 inches. Apply fertilizer to refresh the patch for the coming year (1-1.5 lbs. of 10-10-10 per 100 sq. ft.). **Everbearing** varieties do not require renovation but should be fertilized weekly or bi-weekly once established to maintain their continuous fruit production.

Winter Protection

As winter approaches in areas where the ground freezes hard, protect the dormant crowns from extreme cold and temperature fluctuations by applying 4-6 inches of straw mulch after several hard frosts have occurred. This layer helps reduce the stress of freezing and thawing. In early spring, before new growth starts, remove mulch to provide a clean, dry medium for your developing fruit.

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