

# Planting Strawberries

## Preparation:

Strawberries grow best in well drained soil that has been amended with organic matter. Strawberries should not be planted near eggplants, peppers, potatoes, raspberries, or tomatoes have grown because strawberries are susceptible to verticillium wilt. It is also advisable to move strawberries beds whenever verticillium wilt appears. Soils with high lime content may be unsuitable for this plant. Strawberries need to be protected from freezing during the winter months. In addition to mulching strawberries, planting strawberries at the top of a gentle slope helps minimize winter kill and frost damage to blossoms.

## Planting:

Strawberries can be planted in rows or hills in areas that receive at least 6 hours of sunlight per day. Plant the plants 15 to 18 inches apart in rows spaced about 2 feet apart. When planting bare root strawberries, trim the roots to six inches long. Dig holes deep enough to accommodate the roots. Inside the hole, mound enough dirt to be able to have the plant sit on the mound with its roots spread evenly around it. The base of the crown should be at soil level. If the crown is set too high above the ground, the plant will dry out. Smooth and water to settle the soil. If the plants experience a drought immediately after planting, it may stunt the growth of the plants. Inspect after frost to see if any plants were lifted out of the soil. If they were, gently push them back into the soil and cover.

## Care:

Plants begin to bear fruit heavily in their second season. First year blooms should be removed to encourage further growth. Strawberries need at least one inch of

water per week while the plants are blossoming and until the end of the harvest. After the first harvest in the second season, renovate the plants by mowing them down to about 1 inch above the crown, rake the leaves, fertilize (10-10-10 works well for them) and then water heavily to soak in. Do not get fertilizer on the leaves.

While the fruit is still young, put a layer of straw or newspaper (with nontoxic ink) around the plants for protection. It will keep the fruit from being splashed with mud, manure or other products mixed into the soil.

In fall, apply 3-4 inches of straw mulch around the plants and beds for weather protection.

Strawberries enjoy organic matter such as aged manure and compost.

Berries usually ripen 4 to 6 weeks after the blossoms open.

Healthy strawberry beds will yield five to ten quarts of strawberries for 10 feet of planted bed. Strawberry plants generally live and produce three or five years.