

STRAWBERRY CARE & VARIETIES

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Strawberries are a favorite here in the Willamette valley, and it's no surprise since they probably grow and produce here better than just about any other place in the world. So go ahead and try your hand at growing some strawberries. They don't take up much space, they produce fruit heavily, and there is nothing like a fresh grown strawberry from your yard.

How should I plant my Strawberries?

Strawberries are actually great container plants, so don't worry about space requirements. You can plant strawberries in pretty much anything that will hold some soil, including hanging baskets! One specialized container for strawberries is called a strawberry pot, simply a clay urn with holes in the side to plant your berries, and then they trail down the sides. For those of you with more space and ambition, most people will find it best to plant strawberries in long rows, with the rows and plants being a few feet apart from each other. Make a mounded row, and plant the strawberries in the raised soil to allow drainage. In the growing season, you can flood trenches between rows with water to ensure maximum coverage. Be sure not to plant your berries too deep, as this can cause problems. Keep the crown above ground!

How do Strawberries grow?

Strawberries will actually reproduce quite rapidly on their own if you let them. The central plant is the one you plant, and then they will send out long stems along the ground called "runners". At the end of these runners will form small plants, which will root into the soil and eventually separate and become a whole new plant. These runners can also be cut off and placed elsewhere for easy divisions! It is best to replace your main plants every 3 years or so to ensure maximum production, so keep those new plants healthy and they will mature and take over for the original in time.

What are the difference in the Strawberry types?

Keep in mind that few strawberries grown in this area will be as big as the California-grown ones in the store. But what they lack in size, they make up for in taste: few other strawberries can compete with an Oregon Strawberry in the taste department. **Strawberries will be classified as either June-bearing or Ever-bearing varieties.** June-bearers are the staple in Oregon agricultural production, and bear their crop once over a few weeks in June. Ever-bearing varieties are generally a bit more popular for small-scale gardens, because they fruit for an extended time during the season, usually with a main Summer crop and small production the rest of the season. One thing to note, however, is the fact that everbearing varieties tend to have lesser quality fruit than that of the June-bearing varieties. But they're still full of taste and probably better-tasting than a lot of imported fruits.

What general care will my Strawberries need?

Strawberries will need a little extra attention in the growing season to be really productive. Water is a necessity in the fruit-bearing months. Again, a good method is to make a trench between your mounded rows and flood them when you want to water. Be sure to fertilize a few times in the Spring, a high phosphorous fertilizer is generally recommended in this area. You can also place the fertilizer in the trenches, and it will soak into your rows. If you want really heavy fruit-set, one method that can be used is to pick off all the blooms for the first year to allow the plant to settle in quicker.

Junebearing (Short Day)

Benton: A very hardy variety, with good flavor and quality. It is high yielding and has good mildew and virus resistance. Allow color to deepen before harvesting for maximum sweetness. Ripens late.

Hood: A very popular variety, Hood will bear large, sweet fruit in early June. Excellent for jam or fresh eating, the fruit is of excellent quality. Resists many diseases such as root rot and mildew.

Puget Reliance: High yields of large, smooth, glossy fruit. Suited to growth in Pacific NW. Vigorous growth, with fruit usually held off the ground. Very virus tolerant.

Puget Summer: Puget Summer is a newer variety that shows a lot of promise due to its late ripening time. Puget Summer will still be producing strongly well after the Hoods have had their season. The plants are vigorous, and produce good yields of sweet fruit with a full flavor. Puget Summer has a low rate of fruit rot.

Sequoia: Very large, dark red berries with an outstanding flavor. Plants have good runner production.

Shuksan: Shuksan bears large glossy fruit in mid-June. It also has high quality fruit, which is excellent for freezing, or fresh eating. A very good performer in the Northwest, Shuksan tolerates wet soils, is very cold tolerant, and is botrytis resistant.

Totem: Totem gets its name from the upright growth habit it has, which holds the fruit up off of the ground preventing fruit rot. It is a very heavy early producer, with good quality flavorful berries.

Everbearing (Day Neutral)

Hecker: Medium size, sweet berries are dessert quality. Plants produce high yields.

Quinalt: One of the largest berries, Quinalt is excellent for fresh eating, with flavorful fruit. Not the best freezer, but great right out of the garden. Quinalt produces a lot of runners, which fruit prolifically, making Quinalt one of the heaviest producers available. Resists leaf spot and root rot.

Seascape: Seascape is a very new variety hybridized in Southern California. It has large, firm fruit with exceptional flavor and a high yield. One of its main attributes is its extraordinary virus resistance. An excellent variety.

Tristar: One of the best all around variety for the home garden, Tristar has proven itself time and again. Its flavor is one of the best available in an everbearing type, with large, sweet, aromatic fruit that is fairly firm, making it great for freezing as well as fresh uses. Bears heaviest in Fall. A heavy producer.