

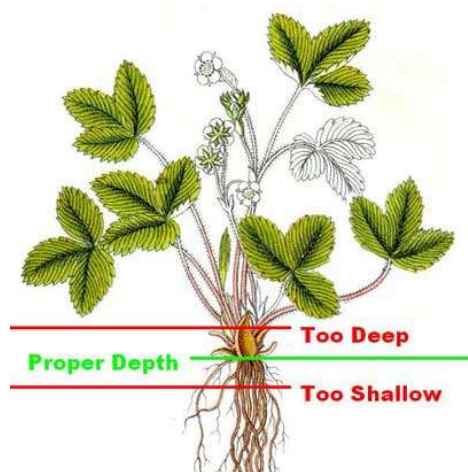
Growing Strawberries for the Home Garden

by Nancy Garrison, Former Urban Horticulture and Master Gardener Program Coordinator with U.C. Cooperative Extension

Planting

If planted in the ground, do so on raised beds that have not had members of the Solanaceae family (tomatoes, pepper, eggplants) grown in that location for at least 3 years. Amend soil with compost, well-composted or aged manure and fertilize with alfalfa meal or a vegetable food fertilizer following label recommendations for rate. After soil is amended, fertilized, and ready to plant, cover soil with a weed block material, preferably with drip underneath. Cut an "X" into material to plant through fabric. This will protect berries from most of the snails, slugs, earwigs, and sowbugs that like to munch on the berries when they are in contact with the soil, as well as minimizing berry rot.

Set the plants 8" to 14" apart in single rows on top of beds that are at least 5" to 6" high and 6" to 12" wide on top or in double rows that are 12" to 24". Space the beds at least 28" apart from center to center. Where no beds are used, set the plants 12" to 16" apart and allow about 28" between rows. Plant so that the upper part of the crown (the area between the roots and the leaf stems) is slightly above or level with the ground – never below grade. Set the roots downwards.



Strawberry plants have shallow roots so they need moisture throughout the growing season. Drip irrigation is recommended so that moisture is kept away from fruit minimizing fruit rot. Keep soil moist but not soggy. Organic mulches tend to favor earwigs, sowbugs and snails and slugs which munch ripening berries, so may not be a wise choice.

Container Growing

A great way to grow strawberries, is to plant in narrow planter boxes that are approximately 6" to 8" deep by 5" to 7" wide by 18" to 4' long. Use fresh, not recycled potting mix mixing in additional fertilizer as directed on the fertilizer label. Thoroughly incorporate fertilizer into potting mix. Plant so crowns are not buried by time you water in. Keep moist but not soggy. Grow in full sun all day. They are BEAUTIFUL ornamental plants, which will dazzle your visitors. They should be spaced 10" to 14" apart depending on level of fertilization and plant size.

Prune off all runners that develop the first season so all the energy is focused into fruit production. If berry production or plants are less vigorous in subsequent years, you may want to put in new plants in fresh soil to get that incredible vigor you witnessed the first year.