



Cornell University Cooperative Extension



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Strawberry Yields Forever

Overview

- Learn to grow a unique plant that also gives a tasty product
- Observe how removing a plant part may affect other portions of the plant
- Try container gardening

Preparation

- Outdoor plantings are great for those with space. Day neutral strawberries also look great in hanging baskets.
- Purchase plants from a reliable nursery. Plants come 25 in a bundle. To help you plan, you'll need enough for about 2 per foot of row, or about 3 per 10 inch pot.

Step by step

Garden

- Choose a weed-free, sunny, well-drained site for your plants. Work about ¼ lb. of urea per 25 feet of row into the soil before planting.
- Place plants in the soil as soon as possible in the spring. If the soil is still frozen when your plants arrive, put them in the refrigerator until you can prepare the ground
- Set plants in a staggered double row offset 4 inches from center, with about 2 plants per foot of row.

Container

- Starting with clean, sterile pots, plant for about 3 plants per 10 inch container, and adjust accordingly for smaller pot size. Try a potting mix such as the Cornell peat-lite mix.
- Several weeks after planting, begin using a standard water soluble fertilizer, and follow directions on the package.
- Find a sunny spot for your containers, preferable in an area with good air circulation, and where you can enjoy them every day!

Strawberries!

The day-neutral strawberry is a relatively new type of strawberry that produces fruit for much longer period of time than standard varieties. Unlike June-bearing strawberries, which form flower buds during the short days of autumn, day-neutrals are not affected by day length. They will fruit the year of planting from August through the first frost in October, and in the second year from June through October. This means about three more months of strawberry shortcake!

The two best cultivars to choose from are 'Tribute' and 'Tristar'.

Materials

- Strawberry plants
- Trowels
- Fertilizer
- Container
- In the garden – garden tools: hoe, pitchfork, spade, measuring tape
- In pots – growing mix, camel-hair paintbrush

Note: Be sure to plant properly by completely covering to the crown level; take care not to bury the crowns. Strawberries have shallow roots, so you'll need to water them whenever they feel dry to the touch!

Go one step further...

Pollination

- Pollination is the transfer of pollen from the anthers, or male parts of the flower, to the receptive female surface, or stigma, of another flower, causing fruit development. Bees are out and about in outdoor plantings to pollinate flowers. Strawberries in containers that are in a greenhouse, indoors, or even outdoors in the city may not get properly pollinated. To make sure that your plants produce fruit, use a camel-hair brush to carefully dust the flowers of several plants with pollen from the anthers.

Experiment with pollination

- Hand pollinate several plants, and leave several others unpollinated. Are there differences in berry numbers? In berry size or shape?

Removing Blossoms and Runners

We know that removing a portion of a plant has an effect on other parts of the plant. Sometimes we intentionally perform this practice to our advantage.

Experiment 1:

- During the first year, remove the entire runner on half of your plants, and leave the runners on the other half. Are there differences between the plants? Try recording yield differences by counting the number of containers of fruit you get from each group over the summer. Use the same container each time to be consistent.

Experiment 2:

- Remove the blossoms on half of the plants for six weeks after planting. Allow the other half to fruit immediately. Are there differences between the plants? Record differences.

Helpful Tips:

Mulching

In the garden:

Mulch immediately after planting with straw to lock in moisture and keep fruit clean. Apply extra mulch over plants in November when nightly temperatures approach 20°F. Cover the plants to a depth of two inches, and remove mulch at the end of March.

In containers:

Mulch works with containers, too; you may find you don't need to water as much. Spread a little straw or similar material over the top of the pot so that no soil shows. You may use lawn clippings if no pesticides have been applied to the grass.

Weeding

Stay ahead of weeds by hand pulling often, and with mulch.

Pests

You may notice a fuzzy gray mold on berries, especially during wet or humid weather. This is gray mold. Get those infected berries out of the planting to keep the disease from spreading. Berries with knobby, hard ends may show up in your patch as well. This damage is caused by the tarnished plant bug. Look for the tiny green nymphs among the blossoms.

Harvesting

Day-neutral strawberries produce a lot of berries! In the year of planting, you can expect one pint or more per plant, with peak harvest in early September. In the second year, each plant will produce at least a quart of berries. You'll get fewer berries in July and early August than in June or late August. Harvest when red and beautiful!

Storage

To store for longer periods, select only firm berries that are not yet fully ripe, cool immediately after harvest, and wrap in plastic after cooling. Store at a temperature as close to 33°F as possible, but be sure the berries do not freeze. Allow the berries to warm inside the plastic before you take them out to prevent condensation from forming on the berries.