

## Strawberry Plants

Mid March to early April is the best time to plant strawberries in Kansas. Select a sunny, well-drained site. The soil should be worked to a fine condition just before the plants are set out. We recommend mixing in *Cotton Boll Compost*, *Bone Meal*, *granular Gardener's Special* and *Gypsum* to an 8" depth to improve the health and condition of your soil before planting.

Strawberries are available in two types—June bearers and everbearers.

**June-bearing** varieties are usually the most productive for home gardens. The plants produce one crop per year between mid May and mid June, depending on the variety and environmental conditions. Berries are a little bigger than everbearing varieties.

**Everbearing** varieties produce one crop during the normal harvest season and a second fall crop with intermittent berries through the summer. Berries are smaller than June-bearing.

### PLANTING METHODS

**Matted Row System:** the most common in Kansas. Plants are set 18-24" apart in rows spaced 3-4' apart. Mother plants produce runners that add to the row, forming a matted row that is the fruit-bearing area the following year.

**Spaced-Plant System:** places mother plants 6-12" apart and most runners are removed. This method requires more labor and plants than the matted row system.

**Elevated Beds or Hills:** 3-4" high, suitable for heavier soils where water drainage is slow. Set plants about 12" apart and remove all runners.

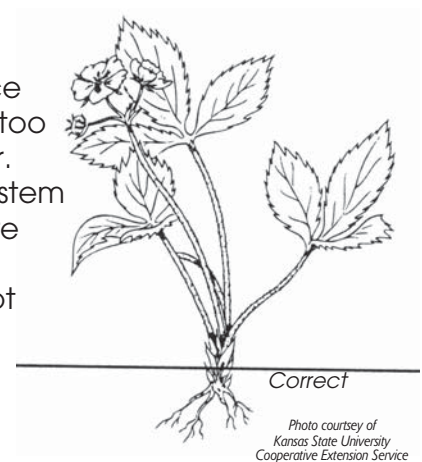
**Space Saving:** A strawberry pyramid or strawberry barrel can solve the problem of lack of space for a bed. Strawberry ladders and hanging baskets are other decorative uses for strawberry plants.

### SETTING OUT PLANTS

Set plants so the crowns are even with the ground surface after the soil has been firmed around the roots. If plants are set too shallow, the crowns will dry out or if too deep they may smother.

Spread the roots slightly, pack the soil around the root system and firm the ground around the plant, being careful not to injure the crown.

After planting, drench the soil with diluted ferti•lome Root Stimulator to encourage the development of new root hairs and to lessen transplant shock. Continue to use Root Stimulator for 2 or 3 more applications at 7 to 10 day intervals.



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## WEED CONTROL

If you have weeds, the postemergent, Poast, can be sprayed directly over the strawberries up to 7 days before harvest. Cypress mulch, as a top dressing 2"-3" thick, will serve as a weed barrier as well as help retain moisture and protect roots from extreme temperatures.

## FERTILIZING

Strawberries need light fertilizing in early and late summer. We recommend ferti•lome Gardener's Special (11-15-11).

## IRRIGATION

Plants need about an inch of water per week during the growing season. During July and August increase to 2". If rainfall is not adequate, slowly water once a week during spring, early summer and early fall, and twice a week in mid to late summer.

Apply enough water to penetrate 6-10" where roots are concentrated. Don't apply water faster than the ground can absorb. Sandy soils need more frequent and smaller amounts of water than heavier soils.

## HARVEST

Fruit is ready to pick when it is completely red. The green cap should be left on to keep the fruit firm.

## FIRST-YEAR CARE

The earlier the mother plants are set, the sooner the first runners (daughter plants) will be formed and take root. These first daughter plants will be the largest plants at the end of the growing season and will bear more berries per plant the following spring.

Remove all flowers during the first year. New plants have limited energy reserves that need to go toward establishing the mother plants and making runners rather than making fruit. If fruit is allowed to develop the first year, the amount of fruit produced the second year is drastically reduced.

## ESTABLISHED PLANT CARE

A winter mulch should be applied after plants have been exposed to several frosts and growth has stopped, but before heavy freezes are expected. Usually the period between Thanksgiving and Christmas is a good time to cover strawberry plants. Wheat straw makes a good mulch. Spread a 3" layer over the entire bed.

In the spring, mulch should be removed from strawberry plants when the soil temperature is about 40° F. Fruit production drops if the mulch remains as the soil temperature increases. There are likely to be freezing temperatures that will injure or kill blossoms, so keep the mulch between rows to conveniently re-cover the berries when freezing temperatures are predicted.