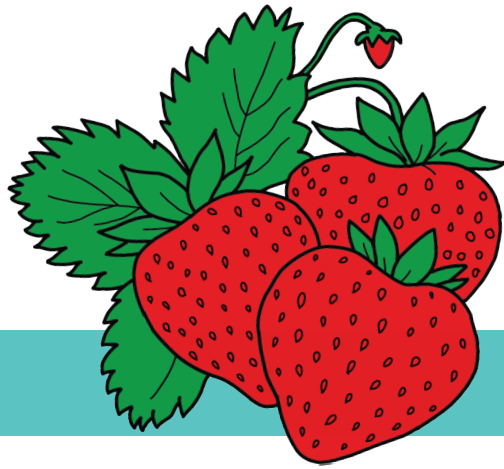


ZAMZOWS

Backyard Berry & Fruit Fest



Strawberry Care

Planting Strawberries

Strawberries can be planted in the ground in early spring as soon as the soil is workable and the ground is no longer frozen. You do not have to wait for last frost like you would with tomatoes and peppers. Strawberries can be one of the first things you plant in March most years. Well-drained soil is very important to strawberries and is not common in our area. Please take some time and work compost into your beds before planting. Strawberries do very well in alkaline soil (which is what we have), but they do not like “wet feet” (soggy roots). Because drainage is so important, raised beds are often used for growing strawberries in a variety of forms: Strawberry pots, hanging baskets, even rain gutters attached to the fence will work! If they drain, you can grow them anywhere.

For your best yields, plant strawberries in an area that gets at least 6 hours of sun. Make sure you prep the soil with compost and then plant using Zamzows Tomato Boom, it's not just for Tomatoes! Strawberries spread by rhizomes, so spread them out 15" apart when planting and eventually they will fill in the area like a blanket. To promote a larger harvest, once the area is covered start pinching off the runners, this will encourage the growth of one large, healthy plant putting its energy into fruit and not daughter plants.

Watering

Like most plants, strawberries like deep and infrequent watering. In the early spring and fall, once a week of water is plenty. You are shooting for a half an inch of water with every watering. In the heat of the summer you might have to move it up to 2-3 times per week just make sure the soil is drying out in-between.

Pests and Diseases

All plants have many diseases that can attack and strawberries are no exception. Leaf blight, leaf scorch, leaf spot, verticillium wilt, and powdery mildew, along with Botrytis fruit or botrytis flower rot are the most common diseases. Most of these can be avoided by picking the right spot for your strawberries, making sure they are in full sun and in well-draining soil. Keep the bed weed-free to improve air circulation. Wet leaves during cooler nights are also an invitation to many diseases and fungi so avoid watering at night.

Birds can also be an issue, so bird netting can be very helpful at keeping birds out. Another option is to have some fun painting rocks to look like strawberries. They are a safe and natural deterrent-- when the bird pecks the rock, they realize it's not food and move on.

Insects such as pill bugs, earwigs, and slugs love to eat strawberries. Bonide Bug and Slug is an organic solution that is very effective if applied once a month. It will keep bugs away while also adhering to organic gardening guidelines. The best defense is always a healthy plant, a stressed plant sends a signal out telling insects that it has an easy target. Applying Zamzows Thrive or Chicken Soup For The Soil twice a year can strengthen the plants and greatly reduce invasions from insects.

Harvest

You will know that berries are ready to harvest when they are red on all sides. Be careful when picking to not damage the plant, it is a good idea to have a small pair of pruners or a clean pair of scissors to help in picking fruit. Picking in the morning while it's cool will help reduce bruising on the fruit. In the hot afternoon, the berry will be softer and will bruise much easier. Keep freshly picked berries cool and wait to wash them until you are ready to use them.