

Strawberries – planting and care instructions

Grow these in the border, in pots, in the veg patch or on the allotment. They are easy to grow and, after a smaller first crop, will provide abundant fruit for at least three years.

- Upon receiving your bare root strawberry plants, immerse them in a bucket of warm water and soak for 20 minutes so the roots can rehydrate.
- Choose a sunny, sheltered spot and dig in plenty of compost or well-rotted manure. Plant your strawberries 45cm apart with 75cm between each row.
- Dig your planting holes to the same depth as the lengths of the roots and twice as wide. Spread the root out in the hole and refill the hole with soil, keeping the crown of the plant where shoots will emerge at soil level.
- Water after planting and mulch with straw or bark to help preserve moisture. Alternatively, they may also be planted through sheets of polythene or membrane which will help smother weeds, retain soil moisture and encourage early cropping by warming the soil.
- Flowers may need protecting from frosts in spring. Pinch out runners as they appear if new plants are not required.
- Strawberries require regular watering throughout the growing season, and ripening fruits should be netted against pests. Water from the bottom as water from overhead can rot the crown and fruit.
- During the growing season, give strawberry plants a liquid potash feed – such as a tomato feed – every 7 to 14 days. In early spring apply general fertilise.
- Harvest from May to July, when fully ripe, complete with stalks and use at once for best flavour.
- Once the crop has been picked, cut out old foliage from plants taking care not to damage emerging young leaves. Clear away straw, foliage and debris from around the plants to reduce opportunities for pests and diseases to take hold, and feed with a balanced fertilizer.