

Latin Name/Genus: *Fragaria vesca*
(Many hybrids exist listed as *F. x ananassa*)
Family: Rosaceae

Difficulty: Moderately easy

Exposure: Full sun

Zone: Hardy to Zone 5, some varieties to Zone 3

Timing: Sow indoors in the winter. An earlier start may result in berries the first year. Start any time between December and the beginning of February. After that time, they will still produce plants, but berries may not be produced during the first season. Transplant out at least 3 weeks after last frost. Strawberry seeds will germinate at any time of the year if some simple steps are taken.



Starting: Germination is the trickiest aspect to growing strawberries. Be patient, and try these tricks: Tuck strawberry seed packet inside a sealed plastic bag or airtight container and place in the refrigerator freezer (not deep freeze) for 3-4 weeks. After removing the bag or container, *do not break the seal* until it (and its living contents) have reached room temperature. This may take several hours. Err on the side of caution. Opening the package too quickly may result in water condensing on the cold seeds, and this will reduce your chances of success. Once the sealed package has “thawed” to room temperature, the seeds are ready to plant. Sow the seeds on the surface of pre-moistened, sterilized seed starting mix in trays or small containers. Place these on a piece of felt or other thick cloth that has its end sitting in water. The idea is to wick up water from below so that the seedling medium stays constantly and evenly damp until germination. An alternative method is to sow strawberry seeds on the surface of moistened soil in a germination tray (or in small pots). Tuck the tray or pots inside a sealed plastic bag, and store in the refrigerator for 3-4 weeks. Move the seeded trays under bright fluorescent lights at a constant temperature of 18-24°C. Seedling heat mats work very well. Germination may take anywhere from 7 days to 6 weeks: Be patient. Once germination occurs, increase ventilation around the plants to prevent damping off. Once the seedlings develop their third true leaf, they can be gently transplanted into their own pots. Be sure to harden strawberry seedlings off carefully and gradually before transplanting outside.

Growing: Space transplants 60cm (24”) apart in rows 90-120cm (36-48”) apart. Ever-bearing varieties (such as ours) tend to produce fewer runners, and may produce more fruit if the runners are removed. In the first year of growth, it may be preferable to encourage runners, and let them fill in the spaces between transplants with new offspring plants. Grow strawberries in a well-drained, sandy loam that has been generously dug with organic matter such as finished compost or well-rotted manure. Dig ¼ cup complete organic fertilizer into the soil beneath each transplant. Keep soil moist, but not soggy. A mulch of straw around plants may help prevent the soil from drying out.

Nutrient Preferences: Strawberries require all macronutrients, especially nitrogen while young, and micronutrients such as boron, calcium, copper, zinc, and iron.



Strawberry *Plant Care Information*

Companion Planting: These little plants respond strongly to nearby plants. Couple them with beans, borage, garlic, lettuce, onions, peas, spinach, and thyme. Avoid Brassicas and fennel.