

Strawberry Cultivation In Oklahoma

Who doesn't love a fresh, juicy strawberry? One of the most popular home fruit crops in Oklahoma, strawberries are relatively easy to grow given the proper care.



Site Selection and Preparation

Great site selection and good soil are always key to successful planting. Full sun (6+ hours/day) is required for best fruit production. Avoid low areas subject to frost, and supply a close irrigation source as strawberries need consistent watering for healthy growth, fruit production and disease prevention, especially during dry spells.

Solanaceous crops like tomatoes, potatoes and peppers are prone to similar diseases as berries, so avoid planting strawberries where these or other berry crops have recently been grown.

Strawberries grow best in mounds or raised beds in well-drained, rich loam mixed moderately with organic matter. If growing on a turf site, allow one year to properly kill the grass and eliminate any grub infestation. Prep the soil with fertilizer (as recommended by a [soil test](#)) and apply additives to adjust to a pH of 6.0 - 6.5 three weeks prior to planting.

Selection

The best performing varieties are those suited for our region. A number of varieties are available as listed in [OSU Fact Sheet HLA-6214](#). Opt for virus-resistant varieties, and plants certified as virus and disease-free.

Of the two production types - June-bearers and everbearers - the June-bearing varieties have a greater yield in windows between early, mid or late May through mid-June. They bear fruit once yearly, while the everbearers produce fewer berries, but more frequently - in May-June, once again in the summer and again in the fall.



Consider planting more than one variety for a varying harvest. Avoiding monoculture also lessens risk of losing entire crops to freeze or disease.

Planting and First Year Care

In Oklahoma, the planting window is between February 1 and March 20. Keep an eye on the weather and avoid setting the plants on dry and windy days, or if cold weather is imminent. Prepare the site first to avoid drying of the plants. It may be necessary to keep the plant roots in water until ready.

Set plants gently but firmly with the crown even with the soil level, approximately 1.5 to 2.5 feet apart. This will allow first year runners to fill in the bed while still preserving an empty area down the middle. Strive for row widths of 18-24 inches. Water well after planting, and water frequently throughout the season as shallow roots are susceptible to drought conditions. Consider drip irrigation as an alternative to overhead watering to conserve water and prevent foliar disease. Don't forget to water strawberries slowly and deeply to support root development during dry fall and winter spells.



Hand cultivation is best for weed control, as loosening the soil helps runners root. Herbicides are damaging to strawberry plants and are not recommended. Consult [OSU Fact Sheet HLA-6239](#) for more information about weed control.



Fertilize between mid-August and mid-September, broadcasting ammonium nitrate at the rate of 1.5 pounds per 100 feet of row. Keep fertilizer off foliage to prevent burning and water to one inch if rain is not expected in the following days after application.

In mid-to-late December, after several frosts have allowed the plants to harden, cover the beds with a three-inch layer of straw. This will protect the plants from the cold temperatures, the drying effects of wind, and the exposure to roots from heaving soil. Remove the straw in March when new growth appears. This [Oklahoma Gardening video](#) demonstrates mulching and offers other protective measures if deer frequent your garden spaces.

The first year prepares for the harvest of the second season. Pick all flowers the first season to allow the plants to direct energy to root and plant growth and the following year's crop.

General Care, Harvesting and Renovation

Providing the optimal nutrition for strawberry production starts with a soil test. In the spring, get a soil sample to prepare for the second and subsequent years. Follow the fertilization instructions according to your yearly sample results.

Bloom to harvest takes approximately 18-45 days and can vary due to variety and weather conditions. After your harvest, renovate the bed (June-bearing varieties only). This process of cutting back, removing diseased material, thinning out and hand cultivating revitalizes the bed, as illustrated in this [video from Oklahoma Gardening](#).

More Information is Available

Strawberries are surprisingly easy to grow given the proper site selection, planting and care, and one bed can offer up to five years of production. More information on this popular berry can be found in the [links at the end of this article](#). Here you can find additional details on strawberry varieties, seasonal care and pest and disease control.

Resources:

[OSU Fact Sheet HLA-6214: Growing Strawberries in the Home Garden](#)

[OSU Fact Sheet HLA-6259: Small Fruit Fertilization and Maintenance Schedule](#)

[OSU Fact Sheet CR-6243: Weed Management in Small Fruit Crops](#)

[Oklahoma Gardening Video Resources: Fruits, Nuts, Berries](#)

[OSU Fact Sheet PSS-2207: How to Get a Good Soil Sample](#)