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## strawberries

Home grown strawberries picked fresh from the garden is a rewarding experience. Fruit should be ready to pick about 12 weeks after planting, and a healthy strawberry plant should produce nearly half a kilogram of berries in a season. Strawberry plants should fruit well for up to 3 seasons.

### Important information

Strawberry plants need a sunny position, good drainage and an enriched soil that has good structure. Strawberries are often planted in raised beds to help achieve the perfect drainage they enjoy. Regular feeding and watering is important for abundant fruit. Mulching is useful for reducing weeds, conserving moisture and to help to keep the fruit clean.

### Be prepared

Soil can be enriched at least 10 days before planting using organic soil conditioners like manures, blood and bone and Searles Real Compost. Alternatively, a complete fertiliser could be used. A combination of fertilisers and conditioners would be very suitable, allowing the organic conditioners to help improve the structure, fertility and health of the soil. Cow manure and blood and bone are both particularly suitable for strawberries as both help to create the slightly acidic conditions strawberries prefer.





### For best results

Strawberries should be planted 40cm apart, allowing 75cm between rows. In very hot weather, it is advisable to plant during the cooler part of the day. The soil should be moist at the time of planting and plants should be watered immediately after planting to firm the soil. During the first two weeks after setting out, the soil must not be allowed to dry out at any time.

### Maintenance

Side dressings of fertiliser are usually needed throughout the growing period, using a complete fertiliser. The fertiliser should be spread evenly around each plant, making sure that no fertiliser comes in contact with the fruit or leaves. Water well after each application. Alternatively, use a soluble or liquid fertiliser. Place the recommended quantity into a watering can, add water, stir and treat your strawberries every fortnight.

Straw mulches are useful for helping to control weed growth, conserving soil moisture and keeping the fruit clean. Weed control matting is a suitable mulching alternative and may be placed over the soil either before or after planting. Slits about 15cms long are cut to allow insertion of the plants.

### Disease and pest control

Mites can be a problem, especially in warm dry weather. Plant growth, yield and fruit quality can be reduced if mites are left uncontrolled. Wettable Sulphur can be used for control of mites, but only during cooler months. Natrasoap or Neem Oil are both natural products that should be effective all year round, especially if particular care is taken to spray the undersurfaces of the leaves. Spraying with a chemical miticide may



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be needed to control severe infestations. Use snail pellets to control snails and slugs. Pyrethrum, Neem Oil and Beat-a-Bug are useful natural sprays against caterpillars.

### Availability

Although autumn is the traditional strawberry planting time, potted strawberry are available for planting during most of the year.

### Happy healthy strong guarantee

At Hawkins, they guarantee that every strawberry they sell will grow up healthy and strong, every time. If at any time you are not completely satisfied, return it to them with your receipt and

they will replace the plant. They're here to help you grow.

### Further information

At Hawkins Home & Garden Centres, Horticultural Advisers are always available to help you choose the right plants, soil conditioners, fertilisers and treatments most suitable for your particular needs. Just ask the experts at Hawkins.

## Hawkins Handy Hint

Grow strawberries in hanging baskets. The practical, multi-tiered Stack-A-Pots are Australian made and allow generous space for root and plant development. Plant all four tiers with strawberries, and enjoy.

For best results, Hawkins recommend that Hawkins Superior Potting Mix be used to grow the best strawberries in hanging baskets and pots.