

Strawberries

Strawberries are a challenge to grow successfully here in Central Texas. Many gardeners are willing to embrace this challenge for the beautiful sweet fruits in the spring. The ideal time to plant strawberries in Central Texas is in the fall – the earlier the better. Here, strawberries are treated as an annual that is pulled up when the plant stops producing and begins to suffer from the heat. Spring planting works best in north and west Texas.

To prepare existing soil for strawberries, mix in one of our good quality composts, such as **Lady Bug brand Revitalizer**. The resulting blend should be about 50:50 compost and soil. At the same time, mix in **Lady Bug Flower Power** or Rabbit Hill Farm Buds & Blooms fertilizer, and **Lady Bug Glittering Greensand**. **Actino-Iron** may be used instead of greensand as an iron supplement and disease preventative. Coffee grounds can also be mixed in to help lower pH. If you have shallow soil or poor drainage, make a raised bed for your strawberries. Use our **Lady Bug brand Hill Country Garden Mix** or **Rose Soil**, and add all of the amendments listed above except for the compost. The ideal strawberry bed is 10” – 12” deep. Strawberries can also be planted in a hanging basket, strawberry pot, or other container. **Lady Bug brand Square Foot Garden Blend** is an excellent soil base, and mix in all the amendments listed above, except for the compost.

Our bare root (5-to-a-pot in sand) strawberries need more frequent watering than our individually containerized strawberries (planted in soil), and should be planted as soon as possible. Plant strawberries 12” apart. Proper planting depth is also important. For bare root plants, dig a hole for each strawberry plant and make a small hill in the center of the hole. Spread the roots out on top of the hill, and plant to a depth where the soil line falls right in the middle of the crown. (See diagram below). After planting either bare root or containerized strawberries, water immediately. Follow with a drench of seaweed or **Lady Bug brand John’s Recipe** to help prevent transplant shock. Seaweed or John’s Recipe may be used every week or two to strengthen and feed plants. Cover strawberries thoroughly with heavyweight **Row Cover** during freezes.

For successful berry production, keep strawberries well watered, but not soggy. Use a minimum of three inches of mulch over the strawberry bed. **Pine Straw** is an especially nice choice. Continue to sprinkle coffee grounds over the soil about every week or two – even on top of the mulch. As hard as it may be, it is recommended to pinch off all runners and flowers until the end of December in order to produce a stronger mother plant. Then, when all conditions are right, a nice crop of strawberries should come in around April. To prevent birds from pilfering fruits when plants begin producing, you can cover them with **Row Cover** or hang **Holographic Scare Tape**. **Sluggo-Plus** is also useful once every week or two to prevent pill bugs (roly-polies) from harvesting your strawberries. Enjoy!

Strawberry varieties for Central Texas

Chandler – A medium to large strawberry; Brilliant red color and exceptional flavor; Medium firm, long, wedge-shaped to conical; Vigorous and high-yielding; Very popular variety; May be susceptible to anthracnose – add **Actino-Iron** to soil.

Seascape – A large, glossy bright red strawberry; Conical to round fruit; Superb flavor and juicy; Performs well in hot, dry climates; Highly virus and disease resistant; Productive; Developed at U C Davis.

Sequoia – A very large, very sweet, medium-red strawberry; Large, wedge-shaped fruit; Big vigorous plant; High quality fruit is somewhat soft and perishable when ripe.

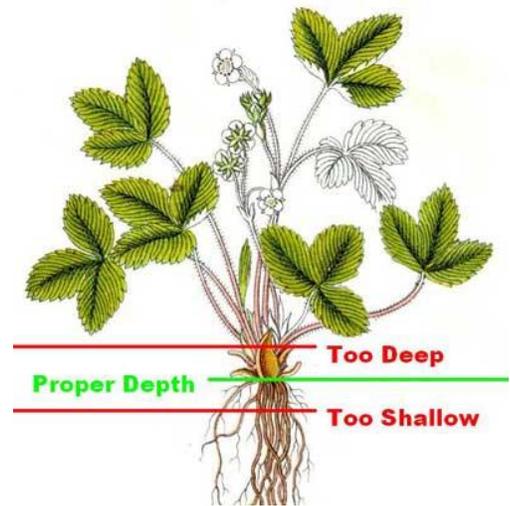


Diagram from <http://strawberryplants.org/>