

# Gardening in Western Washington

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## Library

### Strawberries

Strawberries are one of the most adapted small fruits to the home garden. Wild strawberries, from which our cultivated varieties were developed, are native to most every part of North America. However, it is important to select varieties adapted to the area.

Strawberries are adapted better than any other small fruit crop to western Washington climates. About 1,600 acres are produced in Washington with yields averaging 7,000 pounds per acre. Washington ranks fifth in the United States in production.

Many strawberry varieties that do well and are popular in other sections of the United States have not done well in the Pacific Northwest. The Washington State University Agricultural Research Center has a continuous breeding and testing program to develop, test and select varieties that are adapted to Washington. Cultivars released from this regional breeding programs are noted throughout the United States for their excellent flavor, aroma, juiciness, and superior internal red color for processing.

The strawberry is a perennial that lives for many years but stands are normally productive for four to five years. Viral or fungal diseases or root weevils tend to take over a strawberry stand by the fourth year. Use certified plants when starting a new stand.

There are two main types of strawberries, June bearing and everbearing or "day neutral". June bearing varieties set flower buds in the fall and ripen fruit in June. Most of the commercial production is provided by June bearers. Everbearing varieties set flower buds in summer and again in fall for two harvest periods. Day neutral varieties are similar to everbearing, but they bloom continuously during the summer and fall to provide an extended harvest season. Total season production of berries from the everbearing type is about equal to June bearers, but June bearers produce higher quality berries.

#### June bearing varieties:

- **Hood** - Released in 1965, poor frozen berry quality, good jams and jellies, outstanding flavor, very susceptible to viral diseases.
- **Shuksan** - Released in 1970, standard of the industry, excellent fresh or frozen, very winterhardy.

- **Rainier** - Released in 1972, good virus resistance, excellent quality, low runner production.
- **Totem** - Popular for processing, good winterhardiness, vigorous.
- **Puget Reliance** - Released in 1995. Derived from Puget Beauty. Outstanding virus tolerance but berries have a sweet tart flavor without traditional aroma.
- **Nanaimo** - released in 1996, good winterhardiness, outstanding flavor, but ugly berries.

## Day neutral and everbearing varieties:

- **Quinalt** - Everbearing, small berries, soft fruit, good flavor. Large June and small fall crop.
- **Tillicum** - Everbearing, very small berries, soft fruit, vigorous. Harvest June through fall.
- **Selva** - Day neutral, best for large fruit size and firmness, but lacks flavor. Harvest June through October.
- **Tristar** - Good flavor, firmness and color, average fruit size. Harvest June through October.
- **Tribute** - Firm fruit, flavor superior to Quinalt. Later than Tristar but long harvest season.

## Planting

- **Soil.** Any well-drained soil, adjust pH to 5.5 to 6.5.
- **Established weeds.** Remove all weeds, especially perennials.
- **Matted row culture.** Most popular in home gardens. Set plants 18 to 24 inches apart in beds 3 to 4 feet apart. Allow runners to fill in to form a solid planting with plants every 5 to 8 inches. Remove excess runners. Higher densities lower berry size and quality.
- **Hill culture.** Plants remain as individual plants in the garden, all runners removed. Plants spaced 15 to 18 inches apart in rows 2.5 to 3 feet apart.
- **Planting** in early spring is usually best because of plant availability and reduced water needs.
- **Planting stock.** Purchase certified plants guaranteed free of virus, disease, and insects.
- **Preplant fertilizer.** Apply 0.2 lbs N, 0.4 lbs P, and 0.4 lbs K per 100 square feet. This application will be adequate for two years (This is equal to 2 lbs of 10-20-20).

## Renewal

- **June bearers only:** After harvest (early July) June bearers will benefit from foliage removal. This allows review of plant density, removal of diseased foliage, and stimulates new growth. Apply one-half of the preplant fertilizer amount and irrigate.
- **Day neutral beds:** Growers often replace after two fruiting years as plant vigor and fruit size become marginal. Use small amounts of fertilizer several times early in growing season.

## Diseases

- Verticillium wilt, red stele, viral diseases, botrytis fruit rot, leaf spot, and powdery mildew may be important. Do not follow potatoes or alfalfa if verticillium wilt has been a problem.

## Insects and Pests

- Root weevils, aphids, spider mites, and spittle bugs. Root weevils are very difficult to deal with.
- Slugs and birds. Remove hiding places for slugs and use traps containing baits. Plastic netting will exclude birds from the patch

## Further Information

- [WSU Growing Small Fruits for the Home Garden - Strawberries](#)
- [WSU Hortsense](#)
- [Plant Disease Control Guide - Strawberries](#) (Oregon State University)
- Or contact your local [WSU Extension Office](#).

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