

How to Grow Strawberries with Tower Garden

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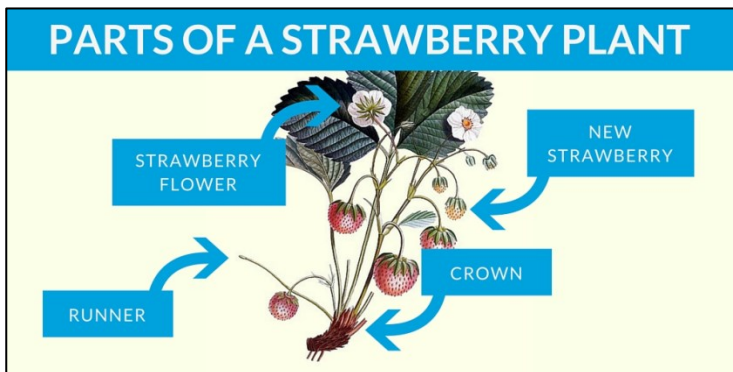
<https://www.towergarden.com/blog.read.html/en/2016/1/growing-strawberries.html>

Strawberries surge with Vitamin C, antioxidants and other healthful things. But let's face it. We really love to eat strawberries because they're so yummy. And since it's basically a fact* that homegrown strawberries taste better than store-bought, shouldn't you be growing your own?

GROW A
STRAWBERRY
TOWER GARDEN



To the uninitiated, growing strawberries can seem a little intimidating. And though it's true that growing strawberries requires a little more forethought than, say, something like mint, it's really not as complicated as you might think.



In this guide, we'll break things down for you so you can start growing your own scrumptious strawberries with Tower Garden.

*OK, maybe it's not a scientific fact. But ask anyone who's tasted a homegrown strawberry, and they'll agree. Why else would growers plant whole Tower Gardens full of strawberries? (Yep, it's been done—several times.)

Before we get started, here's the basic strawberry lingo you should know.

Choosing a Strawberry Type

When you're shopping for strawberry seedlings, you'll likely find the following options:

June-bearing strawberries produce a single (but sizeable) harvest of berries each year, usually during a three-week period in the early summer. For this reason, many gardeners with short seasons (i.e., those in the northern U.S. and Canada) prefer this type.

June-bearers are considered the "classic" type of strawberry. But we generally don't recommend growing them with Tower Garden (unless you live in an area that allows for year-round growing, such as Florida), as you must wait a year before you can enjoy your first harvest.

Everbearing and day-neutral strawberries yield multiple harvests throughout the year, provided temperatures remain between 35–85°F. Though overall production is lower than that of June-bearers, everbearing and day-neutral strawberry plants are more compact and produce fruit in their first year, making them ideal for Tower Gardeners.

If you're not sure which strawberry type or variety to grow, ask your [local extension office](#) for recommendations based on your area.

We recommend planting strawberries near the top of your Tower Garden.

Planting Strawberry Seedlings

Strawberries are relatively cold hardy. You can start them early in the year—as soon as temperatures consistently stay above 35°F.

A few varieties may be grown successfully from seed. But in most cases you'll save yourself about three years of waiting on fruit if you purchase seedlings or dormant, bare root strawberry crowns instead.

Seedlings—since they're already growing—will likely yield fruit earlier than dormant, bare roots. But they're typically the more expensive option. For the price of two or three strawberry seedlings, you can get 20–25 bare root strawberry crowns.



When placing your strawberry plant in the rockwool cube, position the crown of the plant (which is just at the base of the main stem) slightly above the surface. Since new leaves and flowers grow from the crown, it needs access to light and air. Otherwise it will rot, and the plant will die.

Growing Strawberries with Tower Garden

Once you've planted your strawberries, there are a few other important checklist items—namely pruning the first buds, hand-pollinating flowers and removing runners.

Tower Tip: You may find strawberries grow best when your Tower Garden's pH is between 5–5.5.

Prune strawberry buds

This may seem counterintuitive. But you'll likely find that removing the first set of buds on your strawberry plant results in a more vigorous plant (and a heartier harvest later on). This is because pinching or snipping off these initial buds encourages your plant to focus on root and leaf development.

Hand-pollinate flowers (if necessary)

If your plants produce flowers but no fruit, you must “be the bee.” In other words, you'll need to hand-pollinate. The process is simple: just take a small paintbrush or cotton swab and brush the inside of each flower to transfer the pollen. If successful, you should see signs of berries in a few days.



Remove (and root) strawberry runners

Many strawberry varieties produce runners, which are sprawling, root-like offshoots. Runners help soil-grown strawberry plants expand their footprint and collect more resources. If you cut the runners, it has the opposite effect of pruning—it tells your plant to focus on fruit production, resulting in bigger harvests. If you like, you can put the runners you remove in water until they root and then place them in rockwool cubes for more free strawberry plants! (Alternatively, you can pin still-attached runners down to damp rockwool cubes and wait for them to root before cutting them away from the main plant.)



Preventing Strawberry Pests and Diseases

Tower Garden greatly reduces the risk of pests and plant diseases. But you should still check your strawberry plants for the following problems periodically:

- **Aphids** are small insects that typically feed on young plant growth, causing it to appear puckered or deformed.
- **Mites** are sap-sucking insects that stunt plant growth and sometimes even kill plants.
- **Japanese Beetles** feed on plant leaves and flowers.
- **Powdery mildew** forms a white-gray powdery growth, usually on the upper surfaces of leaves.



Alpine strawberries (pictured) yield small, flavorful fruits.

Harvesting and Eating Strawberries

Everbearing strawberries planted in the early spring should start producing fruit by early summer. Once berries are red, they're ripe and ready to eat! To harvest strawberries, cut the stem just above the fruit (don't pull the berries).

You should enjoy your harvests as soon as possible, because the natural sugar in strawberries converts to starch soon after the fruit is picked. (That's one reason store-bought berries usually aren't as good as homegrown.) Strawberries make sweet additions to salads, delectable toppings on desserts and satisfying, simple snacks.