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Strawberry - Fact Sheet

Strawberries (*Fragaria*) are a great plant to grow in the home garden. While fruit from home grown strawberries is usually smaller it is often much more intense in flavour. The increase in flavour is a great reason to grow them at home but also the fact that most commercially produced strawberries are produced with high pesticide inputs. This means that as well as tasting better the fruit will be better for you.

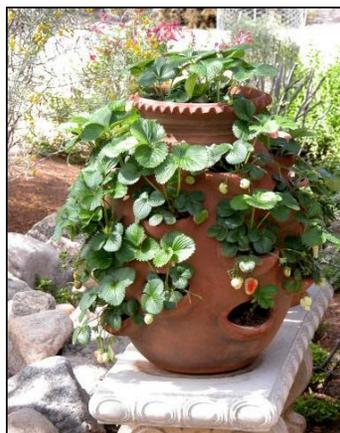
The main pests in strawberries are mites, aphids, snails and slugs and some moulds that cause soft rots in fruits. In the home garden, these problems are more easily prevented but strawberries are just as susceptible to a wide range of pests from weevils to caterpillars. In a mixed veggie and herb garden situation where pest repellent plants are dotted around, this is likely to reduce infestation, but it pays to remain vigilant.

Strawberries (incidentally, from the Rosaceae Family, which includes roses, apples, pears and plums) can be grown just about anywhere in Australia. Soil preparation is extremely important, as it needs to contain plenty of manure and organic matter.

It's also important to mulch plants and the best is probably pea straw, sugar cane or Lucerne. These mulches not only reduce moisture loss over summer and provides extra nutrition as it breaks down, but it keeps the fruit clean.

Strawberries will often need applications of liquid fertiliser regularly too.

Strawberries also do very well in pots. There are even special pots for strawberry growing, with holes around the sides. Strawberry plants look very enticing spilling from these pots.



Plants are more likely to remain healthy if not stressed.

If plants are being persistently attacked by Red Spider Mite, it could be that they aren't planted in the best situation. Maybe there's too much shade or the plants are being crowded. Garlic is a good repellent of Spider Mite.

If strawberry plants are attacked by fungus disease, this is also likely to be an indicator that the plant is in the wrong spot - again, too much shade or the plants are being crowded. Or maybe they are being over-watered.

Virus-free strawberries are commonly available in garden centres, so virus problems shouldn't be an issue in the first few years of growth but are likely to become more of an issue in years 2, 3 and 4. Viruses are passed on to strawberries via sap sucking insects such as aphids so after a few years plants might start to show symptoms of virus infection. This include mottled foliage, deformed fruit, green flowers and slow growth and productivity.

Plants are available throughout almost the entire year and especially in spring and summer.

Care

Strawberries run! They send out runners which will try to establish roots and a new plant. These runners must be cut off as they take energy away from fruit production.

The only other major concerns are water and nutrients. Strawberries need water to produce luscious fruit and plenty of food (always follow instructions on labels though - like any plant, you can kill them with over-fertilising).

Whilst not the longest living of the continual harvest plants, strawberry plants will produce well for three to five years. Replant new plants in a different area (as per crop rotation principles). This will reduce the build-up of pathogens like bacterial diseases

