

Starting a strawberry patch

Back to basics

This is the time of the year where you hear a lot about exotic fruits such as honeyberry, sea berry, chokeberry, and even Canadian cherries (see story above). These fruits are fascinating and can provide us with new taste sensations. In addition, catalogs will offer lots of interesting heirloom fruits such as gooseberry, elderberry, and currant.

All of these fruits are interesting, but many suffer from key shortcomings such as low yields, difficulties to harvest, thorny canes, and bitter fruits.

If you want to grow fruits in your backyard, why not start with something easy? Strawberries are hardy, productive, and delicious.

Many Junebearing varieties are hardy to Zone 3. In order of ripening, these include 'Annapolis', 'Cavendish', 'Honeyoye', and 'Sparkle'. Recommended Zone 4 varieties, again listed in order of ripening, include 'Earliglow', 'Jewel', and 'Cabot'. You can read

your catalogs to learn more of these varieties; in general all are productive and resist most diseases.

Junebearing types are easy to grow. Everbearing and day-neutral varieties are short lived.

Fifty plants are enough for a family of four. Space plants about two feet apart. Choose an array

of varieties to spread your harvest from mid June into mid July. Remove the flowers the first year to help the plants focus on establishment instead of using all of their energy to produce a few berries. The following year and for several years thereafter, you will have buckets of lip-smacking berries with minimal work. *TG*



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