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Planting and growing Strawberries

Steps in planting:

1. Prepare your soil by adding lots of rich humus or compost to your soil. Strawberries like well-drained, fairly rich soil for best production. Your bed should be in a warm and sunny location.
2. Till or rake the soil several times in two weeks prior to planting. Each time you do this you will eliminate many freshly germinated weeds. These are weeds that will never rise to cause trouble in your new strawberry bed. Then prepare the bed. If your soil is heavy or drains poorly, make rows if raised mounts 5-6 inches high and 12-18 inches wide. Plat your berries about 12 inches apart, staggering them in the mounded rows. Leave a ditch between your mounded rows so you can flood irrigates if this is possible. Otherwise, use a perforated drip-line to irrigate your plants, placing the drip-line down the center of each row.
3. You're ready to plant. Trim off most of the old leaves from each plant. One can be left on, if it makes handling the plant easier for you.
4. Thoroughly soak the plant roots. Now place them in a basket, bucket or sack, so they will not dry out. When planting, never remove more plants from the basket than you can put into the soil in 15 minutes.
5. Use a trowel, or some other tool for making holes, This can be done quickly by inserting the blade if the trowel into the earth, then pressing back, and tipping it to both sides. The hole will be large enough for the spread of the roots.
6. Set plants at the correct depth. The base of the crown should be at the level of the soil surface. Plants set too deep will smother and die; and if they are set too high, they will dry out.
7. Spread out the roots, then carefully firm the soil around the roots. Take care with this step, for the success of the planting depends on it. Leave no air pockets in the soil.
8. If the soil is dry, pour a pint of water with some diluted soluble fertilizer around each plant. This is excellent insurance to make certain that the plant roots don't dry out. (Which would cause the plant to die.)

General information for growing strawberries:

Keep your strawberry beds moist, but not saturated. You can help to hold moisture by applying a layer of organic mulch about 2 inches thick around your plants. There will be quite a bit of foliage before the plants start making blooms. Each bloom produces a strawberry. You want to keep the weeds out of your beds as they deplete the soil of water and nutrients, which the berries need. After you start harvesting your berries, the plants might start making runners, which are a long stem that the plant sends out from the center of itself. After the runner has grown a foot or more, you will notice a cluster of leaves at the end of it. This is a new plant. If you leave it where it grows, the new plant will send down roots and grow where it is. You can cut the runner free from the mother plant and use the new plant as a replacement or just add it to the existing bed. While the mother plant is making these baby plants, it will not produce a lot of blooms or berries. You can encourage more berries by cutting the runners off as soon as they grow. It just depends if you want more plants or more berries. Some varieties will produce more runners than others.

There are two types of strawberry plants commonly grown. One is an ever-bearing type which bears fruit all during the summer into fall. Some varieties are Fort Laramie, Fern, Chandler, and Quinalt.

The second type is the June-bearing type, which produces one crop per year, in late spring or early summer. Varieties include Sequoia and Totem.

Plants this type for preserving or freezing as they produce their fruit all at once. They are the highest quality strawberries, mainly because they put all their energy into producing their fruit quickly, rather than having their fruiting season stretched out like the ever-bearing types.

Both types produce good fruit and it is a good idea to have some of both types, just to have fruit all season long.

Feed your strawberries twice a year, once when growth begins and again after the first crop. Feed with an all-purpose fertilizer that has lots of nitrogen and phosphorus.

Control snails and slugs; watch for aphids and spider mites. Do not use chemicals if fruit has set.

Happy pickin's!