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G85-752 Strawberry Cultivars for Nebraska

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Strawberry Cultivars for Nebraska

The purpose of this NebGuide is to help you make the proper strawberry cultivar* (variety) selection for your area of the state and individual needs.

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Proper strawberry cultivar selection is important for successful and satisfying results. Cultivar selection should be based on the family's intended use of the strawberry fruit (i.e. dessert use, freezing or preserves); on labor available to harvest the strawberries; and on available growing space.

June-Bearing Vs. Ever-Bearing Strawberries

June-bearing strawberries produce one crop each season. Their fruit begins to ripen in mid-June, and they usually produce for about three weeks. June-bearing strawberry harvest can be spread over several weeks, however, if cultivars with different periods of maturity are planted.

Ever-bearing strawberries, as the name suggests, produce fruit during the normal June season and again in the fall. The fall crop normally ends with the first killing frost. Generally, "ever-bearing" strawberries are not as good as "June-bearing" types in either quality or yield. High summer temperatures (especially during August and September) often reduce both yield and fruit quality.

It is important that gardeners select strawberry cultivars that are best adapted for cultivation in their area of the state. Cultivars must have adequate hardiness to survive the winter; heat and drought tolerance to survive the summer; and the ability to survive spring frosts.

Begin by determining the proper number of plants and spacing to fit your growing space. Generally, 25 plants of an early and 25 plants of a late June-bearing strawberry cultivar will provide sufficient berries for a family of four for dessert use, preserves and freezing. Be sure the strawberry plants are free of known diseases and "essentially" virus-free when purchased.

Plant Hardiness Zones

Nebraska has two major plant hardiness zones -- Zone 4 and Zone 5 as shown on the map. If the cultivar listed has your zone number or lower, it is hardy in your area.

Horticultural Regions

The horticultural regions (A-E) shown on the map are further subdivisions of the plant hardiness zones and are more specific to Nebraska's growing conditions. They take into consideration other environmental factors, such as frost occurrence, seasonal rainfall distribution, wind induced desiccation (drying), humidity, soil characteristics, and the duration and intensity of sunlight. The combined effect of all these factors determine geographic adaptability of a plant or cultivar.

Soil type and frost dates must also be suitable for plant growth. Some conditions can be controlled by irrigation, soil modification, bind protection, partial shade, or humidity control. Others, such as frost dates, length of growing season and minimum winter temperatures, are among the least of the major factors governing the geographic adaptability of plants. Close attention to a plant's response to these factors is important in cultivar selection.

Located on the western edge of the Midwestern Region, Nebraska has many of the climatic conditions of both the Great Plains and the Intermountain regions. These include low atmospheric pressure coupled with wind movement and low humidity, which allows moisture to evaporate quickly, thus contributing to drought conditions.

Low temperature-hardiness is the capacity of plants to tolerate low winter temperatures. It is different between species of fruit plants and among cultivars of strawberries. Cold damage to the strawberry crown usually occurs around -10°F.

As you go west in Nebraska, it becomes more difficult to grow strawberry plants. This difficulty results from lower rainfall, lower humidity, higher wind movement, elevation, and higher soil pH.

Fruit plants that are adapted to the very cold winters of Canada and the New England states will not survive the cold, semi-arid winters of Nebraska. This apparent lack of hardiness is mainly because of the high wind velocity and low humidity associated with Nebraska winters. The effect is called desiccation or drying out.

Some man-made "micro-climates," which refer to the climates of small areas, will extend the hardiness of a cultivar. The climate in Lincoln and Omaha is considerably different than that of the farming area just outside their city limits. Both cities have 180-day frost-free growing seasons. This is due to the warming effect on the environment and protection from wind exposure by the many houses, streets, and trees.

The use of straw mulch helps protect strawberry plants against low temperature damage and frost heaving in heavy soils. The small size of the plant enables the gardener to cover the plants with straw or hay to protect against cold injury. When properly grown, adapted strawberry cultivars will harden off in the fall and withstand Nebraska's winter temperatures. Straw mulch helps the plants survive by providing a protective insulation layer. Apply mulch to the strawberry bed after several hard frosts around November 1st-30th (west to east) for winter protection.

Mulch can also be used for frost protection in the spring by protecting the flowers of strawberries against frost. Put a plant covering or straw mulch over the plants, entirely covering the blooms, when there is a threat of frost. The mulch can be left on the plants for one or two days without damage to the

leaves from lack of light, but must be carefully removed with a fork after this time.

There are many strawberry cultivars that are available to the general public. However, this publication recommends only a few cultivars for Nebraska that are considered truly adapted to specific areas of the state. Recommendations are based on cultivar testing, hardiness, maturity, and quality. The cultivars are listed in order of maturity (ripening). Mail order sources are listed on the last page in alphabetical order by source number. In Nebraska, strawberries should be planted from April 1st to May 30th.

**Cultivar: A term meaning cultivated variety, now used in the place of the term variety to indicate a specific type of horticultural plant.*

STRAWBERRY CULTIVARS

| Cultivar ¹ | Ripening ² Season | Zone | Region | Best Uses | Brief Description |
|---|---------------------------------|------|--------|---|--|
| JUNE-BEARING CULTIVARS | | | | | |
| <i>Early Season</i> | | | | | |
| Sunrise LSC, RS & V ³ | 0 | 5 | A-B | Commercial, Home-gardening | High yielding; large fruit, firm flesh, firm skin; vigorous on poor soil, drought tolerant; very susceptible to leaf spot disease. (Sources - 1, 2, 3, 4 & 6) |
| Earliglow LSC, RS & V | 1 | 5 | A-B | Commercial, Home-gardening, Dessert, Freezing, Preserves | Medium fruited, firm flesh, firm skins, handles well; very productive, vigorous grower (Sources - 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 & 6) |
| Early Red M, LSC, RS & V | 2 | 4-5 | A-C | Commercial, Home-gardening, Freezing, Preserves | High yielding, large fruited, firm flesh, firm skin, good quality berries; has vigorous runner production; somewhat susceptible to leaf spot disease. (Source - 1) |
| <i>Mid-season</i> | | | | | |
| Redcoat M, LS, LSC | 4 | 4-5 | A-D | Dessert | Winter hardy; large fruited, firm flesh, firm skin, berries are glossy medium red color; susceptible to Red Steel and Verticillium Wilt. (Sources - 1, 4 & 6) |
| Surecrop LS, LSC, RS & V | 5 | 5 | A-B | Commercial, Home-gardening, Freezing | Large fruited, firm flesh, bright shiny red sweet berries; vigorous on poor soil; chlorotic and poor yielding in west, central and northeast part of the state. (Sources - 1, 2, 3, 4 & 7) |
| Delite LS, LSC, RS | 7 | 4-5 | A-C | Commercial, Home-gardening, Freezing, Dessert, Preserves | Large fruited, firm flesh, glossy bright red large berries, hold size well during harvest. (Sources - 1, 2, 3, 5 & 6) |
| | | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|--|----|-----|-----|---|--|
| Dunlap | 7 | 4-5 | A-D | Dessert | Medium fruited, soft skin; vigorous on poor soil; fruits under most types of weather conditions. (Sources - 1 & 4) |
| Red Chief M, LSC, RS & V | 7 | 4-5 | A-C | Freezing, Preserves | Large fruited, firm flesh, firm skin, good quality berries; has vigorous runner production; somewhat susceptible to leaf spot disease. (Sources - 1, 2, 4 & 5) |
| Scott M, LS, LSC & V | 8 | 4-5 | A-D | Commercial, Home-gardening, Freezing, Preserves, Dessert | High yielding, large fruited, firm flesh, firm skin; vigorous on poor soil; many runners; particularly resistant to Verticillium Wilt. (Sources - 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 & 6) |
| Guardian M, LS, LSC, RS & V | 9 | 4-5 | A-C | Commercial, Home-gardening, Preserves | High yielding, large fruited, firm flesh, firm skin; vigorous on poor soil; cold hardy; berries hold well for shipping. (Sources- 1, 2, 3, 5 & 6) |
| Midway RS | 10 | 4-5 | A-D | Heavy soils | Large fruited, firm flesh, with a tough glossy rich red surface. (Sources - 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 & 6) |
| Late Season | | | | | |
| Robinson V | 10 | 4-5 | A-D | Most soil | Drought tolerant; large fruited, soft flesh, soft skin; vigorous on poor soil; small plants. (Source - 1) |
| Sparkle RS | 12 | 4-5 | A-E | Dessert, Freezing | Cold hardy, blooms late and escapes spring frosts; small fruited, soft flesh, rich crimson red color, and fine quality fruit. (Sources - 1, 2, 3 & 4) |
| Bounty | 19 | 4-5 | A-E | | Cold hardy; medium large fruited, medium red in color, and yields well. No soil disease resistance. (Sources - 1 & 4). |
| EVER-BEARING CULTIVARS | | | | | |
| Ogallala | 10 | 4-5 | A-E | Table use, Preserves | Originated in Nebraska. Very cold hardy, very drought tolerant; rich tangy flavor, overripe berries may get slightly bitter taste; short fruiting scapes, berries are hard to find. (Source - 4) |
| Ft. Laramie LS, LSC*** | 12 | 4-5 | A-D | Home-gardening | Cold hardy; large fruited, firm flesh, berries are attractive; excellent filler and abundant runner production. Produces a better fall crop in central Nebraska because of less fruit rotting. |

| | | | | | |
|---|----|---|-----|---------|--|
| | | | | | (Sources - 1 & 4) |
| Ozark Beauty LS, LSC | 14 | 5 | A-B | Dessert | Cold hardy; drought tolerant; medium fruited, wedge-shaped fruit, glossy red flesh with yellow seeds; fruit better when runners are removed. (Sources - 1 & 4) |
| ¹ Cultivars are listed in order of maturity. ² Ripening seasons: Days after the cultivar "Sunrise" ripens. ³ Resistance to: LS Leaf Spot, LSC Leaf Scorch, M Mildew, RS Red Steel V - Verticillium Wilt. | | | | | |

Names and Addresses of Sources*

Source Nursery Name and Address

1. Ahrens Strawberry Nursery, Huntingburg, Indiana 47642
2. W. F. Allen, Co., Salisbury, Maryland 21801
3. Brittingham's Plant Farm, Salisbury, Maryland 21801
4. The Conner Company, Inc., P.O. Box 534, Augusta, Arkansas 72006
5. Wm. Krohne Plant Farm, Rt. #6, Dowagiac, Michigan 59047
6. Rayner Bros., Inc. P.O. Box 1617, Salisbury, Maryland 21801

*This listing is not complete. Check with your local nursery and/or garden center, and with other nursery catalogs for suggested fruit cultivars.

Reference to commercial products or trade names are for educational purposes only. No discrimination is intended and no endorsement by the Nebraska Cooperative Extension Service is implied for specific products.

File G752 under: HORTICULTURE

B-9, Fruits

Revised June 1985; 12,000 printed.

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Elbert C. Dickey, Director of Cooperative Extension, University of Nebraska, Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources.

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