

How to Plant Bare Root Strawberries

What is a Bare Root Strawberry?

So exactly what is a bare root strawberry plant? Bare root strawberry plants are dormant plants that are not planted in soil. Instead, they appear as bare roots with shriveled foliage attached. Nurseries and seed catalogs most often ship out bare root plants since they're easier and less expensive to ship. Planting bare root strawberries properly is the key to ensuring that they wake from their dormant state and begin berry production as soon as possible.

It isn't always easy to tell if the plant is alive and healthy, but there are some hints that can clue you into the welfare of the plants.

First, they should not show any signs of mold or mildew and should not smell odd or rotten. Second, the berry plants should be free from damage with foliage intact and heavy, not light, dried out root systems.

Planting Bare Root Strawberries

Plan on planting the bare root berries outside after all danger of frost has passed in your region. **June bearing varieties** should be planted in early Spring once the soil has thawed.

Prepare a full sun, well-draining garden plot with **3 inches of compost dug** into a 12-inch depth. Also, work in **1 pound of 10-10-10 fertilizer** for each 100 square feet of the bed. Soak the bare root strawberry plants for 20 minutes in a bucket of water. Just soak the roots, there's no need to submerge the entire plant. This allows the roots to rehydrate and break their dormant cycle.

Next, dig planting holes to the length of the roots and twice as wide. Gently spread out the roots in the holes and fill in with soil, keeping the crown of the plant at soil level. Space the plants 18 inches apart in rows that are 3 feet apart. Water in well and lay a 2 inch layer of mulch around each plant to conserve water. Thereafter, irrigate the bed each week with 1-2 inches of water. Bare root strawberry plants should begin leafing out by early Summer.

Storing Bare Root Strawberries

Storing bare root strawberries is not recommended, but sometimes life throws us a curve ball and it just can't be avoided. Of primary concern when storing bare root berries is protection from the cold weather. Ideally, the **strawberry plants will winter much better in the ground**. If it can't be helped, however, pot them in some good quality soil and place them in the garage, root cellar or basement to protect them from the cold — or during warmer months, keep them cool.