


1898

# The Strawberry

George Washington Barber  
*University of Rhode Island*

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## Recommended Citation

Barber, George Washington, "The Strawberry" (1898). *Student and Lippitt Prize essays*. Paper 60.  
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## THE STRAWBERRY.

The Strawberry belongs to the rose family. Its botanical name is Fragaria, from the Latin fragrans, meaning sweet smelling. There is much doubt about the origin of this plant; the Saxon word for strawberry was strewberige from the berries lying strewn upon the ground. An English authority claims that the name is derived from the practice of laying straw between the rows; although more probably it is from the wandering habit of the plant, straw being a corruption of the Anglo Saxon strae, from which we have the English verb stray. Another tradition is that children strung the berries on straws, hence the name.

A strawberry plant is made up of organic matter and ash constituents. According to the analysis of the ash, it contains potash, lime, silica, magnesia, phosphoric acid, chlorine, perphosphate of iron, organic matter, soda. According to an analysis by Pierre, a French writer, eleven thousand, two hundred and ten pounds is the weight of strawberry plants growing upon an acre of land, not including the roots. The weight of the same number of plants after removal of their water is five thousand and nine hundred pounds. This shows that the plants which bear this luscious fruit are composed

mostly of water.

The soil should be thought of before the variety of berry. The crop depends chiefly upon the choice and location of the soil. In many cases the strawberry beds are made of poor soil and grow many noxious weeds and grasses. If possible select a rich loam. In choosing a site for strawberry culture it is very important that the market or a shipping point should be near the farm, and the population large enough to supply pickers. After choosing a location well situated as to market, the variety of strawberry to be raised must be considered; if an early one, a rich warm soil on a sunny slope will yield the desired fruit. If a late variety is cultivated, select a northern hillside or low land with rich, moist, cool, and rather heavy soil.

The strawberry plants need as much care and food as any other crop in the garden or on the farm. Abundance of moisture should be available. This is the chief need. The soil must be made mellow by thorough plowing and long continued harrowing until all lumps disappear. Then roll the ground well to make it firm and smooth. If necessary, Indian corn or garden vegetables may be planted one or two years to bring the land into good condition for the growing of berries. When



the fertilizer for the corn is being considered, the crop of strawberries to follow should be kept in view. For land at all heavy fall plowing is advisable. If the white grub is detected, cross plow before frost. In early spring cover the surface with manure or fertilizer. Strawberries should have from 15 to 20 cords of stable manure per acre; or one ton of ground bone,  $1/2$  ton muriate of potash and 400 pounds of nitrate of soda, to be worked into the soil by the plowing and harrowing.

Strawberry plants may be set at any time from April to November, if the transplanting is performed with care. In northern latitudes early spring is preferred, because the ground is moist and showers abundant. Pot-grown plants are easily obtained, and may be successfully set in the fall so as to obtain a crop the next season. Strawberries may be planted best in Autumn, in the South. To ascertain the number of plants needed per acre multiply the distance in feet between the rows by the distance between the plants in the row; their product will be the number of square feet for each plant; the number of feet in one acre 43,560 divided by this product will show how many plants the acre will require. A good rule is to set strawberries one foot apart, in rows

three feet apart, which calls for 14,520 per acre. If the plants are set as just stated, the runners can fill a space of from 12 to 14 inches in width between the rows and leave 20 to 24 inches for a path. The harvest will under favorable conditions be greater per acre and of better quality if the plants are managed in this way than if they are allowed to run all over the bed. When ready to transplant, mark out straight rows after rolling, then plow narrow furrows, and run water through them until well soaked. Drop the plants the proper distance apart along the edge of the furrows. The one who distributes the plants is followed quickly by the transplanter, who takes the plant in one hand and a handful of muddy soil from the edge of the furrow in the other, places the plant in the hole, and at the same time spreads the roots and covers them almost with one motion. A quick and skillful man can plant an acre a day and do it well.

Some growers say that strawberries need not be set every second or third year. One claims to have raised his finest crops from vines seven years old. This depends very much upon the care given the plants. They need winter protection in most climates. Some growers have applied earth as a covering; but it does not prove a success, because the water dries out of the soil and the plants die. Good results have been ob-



tained by using pine boughs, marsh hay, or leaves. The common way is to leave the mulch on the ground around the plants in the spring, without removing; but the better method seems to be to rake off the mulch between three or four rows, then loosen the soil with cultivator or plow, and let the sunshine and air get in around the plants. After this replace the mulch and uncover other rows as before. No plants should be disturbed when in bloom; but if the ground is hard, it is better to cultivate, than to have small plants and small crops. When the plants are first set the horse cultivator should be used once a week and the land hoed every two weeks or sufficiently often to keep the field clean as well as mellow.

In Rhode Island the berries are gathered about the middle of June and the harvest continues until into July. The date depends somewhat upon the variety of the fruit. The Captain Jack and Jucunda begin to ripen June 15 and last until July 6. Lady Rusk ripens about June 30. The best results are obtained by harvesting them in the morning before the sun is too hot. The pickers should be watched closely, the overseer being placed in charge of twenty men. The baskets should be inspected often, and are occasionally emptied. One man should

be engaged at the packing shed to keep record of the berries picked. Sometimes when many acres are to be harvested, tickets are given for each trayful of berries. At night the tickets are handed in at head-quarters and cashed. The baskets generally used are the square chip ones. They are ordinarily shipped in crates holding thirty-two quarts.

The strawberry is not subject to many diseases. The most injurious is the leaf blight. It attacks the upper sides of the leaves and forms brown spots; spores from which reproduce the disease. To prevent its growth remove and destroy all refuse and affected parts. Spraying with Bordeaux mixture is also recommended to prevent the growth on the young plants. This should be used after the old leaves are removed. The mixture costs about one and one-third cents per gallon. It is made of copper sulphate six pounds; unslaked lime four pounds; water twenty-two gallons. The copper is dissolved in sixteen gallons of water. The lime is slaked in the other six. Stir the lime well and strain the whitewash into the copper solution.

One of the most injurious insects is the White Grub, which is found as a beetle in May or June. The female lays a large number of eggs and in the spring hatches the small white grubs, which do as much mischief as they can to the



roots. The third year the large grubs commence their work and destroy many plants. After two or three seasons the grub passes into the chrysalis stage and the following spring forms a new beetle. The one safe course is to plant only on land that has been cultivated two years. In small culture digging them out may be practised; or if obtainable, a domesticated crow may be employed, which will destroy many grubs per day.

Some have said that there is no profit in growing small fruits. Why bother with a few strawberry vines? What better crop can a farmer raise than the strawberry? Concerning this fruit a writer once declared that "doubtless God could have made a better berry, but he never did." In regard to the growth of this fruit, look over the New England states, especially Rhode Island. This is the state in which we are most interested. Our soil and climate are both favorable for the cultivation of strawberries, and our markets are not fully supplied with home grown fruit. Why should we be satisfied with fruit that we receive from outside the state? The value of an acre of strawberries at ten cents per quart is six hundred and ninety-two dollars; the total cost, for picking, and setting new beds each year three hundred and ninety dollars and forty cents per acre. The fruit outside our state is far inferior to our home berries. The southern berries are pick-



ed and then transported many miles to some large fruit house in our state, and from this point shipped to grocers or fruit peddlers in the villages. Would you not rather have fresh fruit from the garden than that just described? The strawberry should be a home fruit for every one. We ought to have fresh berries from our own gardens every day during the season. Please notice the yield of six hills of Lady Rusk as 6.5 quarts; this will supply the family for a day. Are they not profitable? They most certainly are, because the farmer can use them himself, or if he has a large crop the near village will welcome the fresh fruit. There are many villages throughout our state that may be supplied in this way with berries, the market is still open and not only villages but cities throughout the New England states. We could not have better markets than Providence and Boston. How many abandoned farms there are throughout the state that might be used for the cultivation of berries! Let me offer a bit of advice? If you have tried strawberry growing and failed, try again and care for the plants. If you have never tried it, then whether clerk, parson, or farmer begin. Supply the home-table with the fresh fruit of this most delicious berry.

GEO. W. BARBER.