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How many strawberries in a grow bag

Bob asked: I have a large container on my patio with strawberry plants in it. This was the 2nd summer for these strawberries. Unfortunately, the plants only put out a handful of strawberries back in early June. I was very disappointed to say the least. I had stopped by a local nursery to pick their brains about the lack of yield I had this summer. The lady there told me that strawberries grown in containers don't typically produce a lot of fruit compared to those growing in the ground. She also asked me if I had fertilized my strawberry plants last fall before winter set in. I had never heard of doing this. Why would you fertilize a plant that is about to die from the coming cold months? If this is true, when do I fertilize? Now, that the plant is still green and alive, or do I wait for it to curl up and die after winter hits? It should be noted that I leave this container outside on my patio uncovered and exposed to the snow and elements all winter long. It survived fine this way last winter and grew back really nice this past spring, so I really didn't have to baby it at all to keep it alive. It survived! Also, what fertilizer, if any, do I use for this fall fertilization?Answer to: Growing Strawberries in Containers..Bob, Thanks for writing in and asking about the best way to grow strawberries in containers. Believe it or not, many people write in asking about one aspect or another of using mobile, hanging, or other smaller containers for cultivation of their strawberry plants. And, like you, many people are less-than-thrilled with their results. To help you get things going in the right direction, let me make a few comments, and I'll then list some of the common problems people have to deal with when growing strawberries in containers.First a little bit of information about the strawberry plant itself may be in order. Amazingly, strawberry plants don't actually die during the winter months if cared for properly (or if they live in a location where temperatures are sufficiently mild). They enter a state of dormancy where they are still living, but only just barely. This reduces the metabolic demands that are present normally to a bare minimum. The leaves die back, plant functions slow to a crawl, and they surely do look dead. But, come warmer temperatures during the late winter or spring, they burst forth again into vibrancy and verdant vivaciousness! Potted plants can even survive without any additional care in places with relatively mild winters simply by benefiting from the radiant heat that passes through house walls (if they are kept close enough).6 Tips for Growing Strawberries in ContainersWith that said, strawberries CAN be grown in containers successfully. They can even produce just as well in containers as their in-ground counterparts. However, since strawberry plants don't typically find themselves in pots out in the wilds, the folks who put them there need to keep a few things in mind. Remembering these tips will help your plants do well.1. Pots are small, so avoid overcrowding.Strawberry plants are small, and they can easily fit into most pots. But, just like most other plants, they like their space and hate to be crowded. When growing strawberry plants in containers, the temptation is to let more plants root than the small area can support. To make sure you get the most out of your berry plants, be sure to let no more than 3 (or if a smaller variety, 4) plants root per square foot of soil. Since strawberry plants have relatively shallow root systems, the surface area (as long as the pot or container doesn't taper too quickly) is sufficient to use as your calculation. If you allow too many plants to root, they will provide you with few strawberries, even if they look green and lush.2. Snip the runners.Most strawberry plants put out runner plants. These plants are great if you have a garden with extra space, but they aren't so great for pots. While they will often make a very pretty cascade from a hanging basket, they also put quite a drain on the productive capacity of your plants. Snipping the runners as soon as they are recognized will allow and encourage the plants to devote most of their energy in the direction you would like: making strawberries!3. Growing strawberries in containers increases exposure.Strawberries are temperate by nature. That means they thrive in the temperate zones of earth above and below the equatorial tropic zones. They can't stand tropical conditions very well without some sort of climate control. If the heat doesn't do them in outright, the fungi and pests that do thrive in the tropics usually will. Growing strawberries in containers exposes the all-important roots of the plants to warmer temperatures than they would normally find in the ground. Without the thick and insulating properties of the ground surrounding their roots, strawberries in pots will often see their root temperature rise with the temperature of the surrounding soil. Especially if you have dark pots/containers, the root temperature is likely to rise to the point where strawberry production is affected. To mitigate this, try to shade the containers where your strawberries live. You can also put a reflective material like aluminum foil around the pots to dissipate the heat and to shade the pots as well. Also, lightly spraying the containers with a little bit of water when you water the plants can cool them as well as the water evaporates and takes some of the residual heat with it.4. Water more often with less water.Due to the exposure mentioned in the last point, the soil in pots will often dry out more quickly than you water them. Or, to compensate for that tendency, you may water them too much and keep the soil soggy. The trick to growing strawberries in containers is to avoid both dryness and sogginess. That is accomplished by watering with less water several times a day in the heat of the summer. The soil should stay just-damp, never dry. Also, make sure that your chosen container will drain adequately. If the soil stays soggy, even beneath the surface, deadly microbes can set up shop and deal death to your once-happy plants.5. Container strawberries need attention after harvest.Unbeknownst to most, the life cycle of a strawberry plant is somewhat complex. Strawberries themselves don't actually originate in the springtime. They started their lives in the fall of the previous year. After producing a (hopefully) bountiful harvest for you, the humble strawberry plants don't check into the equivalent of a plant Hilton for the rest of the summer to enjoy life as a container plant. No, indeed. They get busy growing and reproducing themselves via runners. Not only that, but by the beginning of fall, the little strawberry plants have begun forming the perennating buds within their crowns that will turn into next year's flowers. The flowers turn into strawberries subsequently. So, failure to pay attention to the well-being of your container strawberries after they give you strawberries will come back to bite you in the long run. They need tender loving care through the fall. Specifically, to provide the nutrients your plants need to maximize perennating bud formation (which you will then harvest as strawberries the next spring), apply an appropriate fertilizer (10-10-10 conventional, or an equivalent organic fertilizer) in August at a rate of approximately 1/3 of an ounce per square foot.6. Provide extra insulation for strawberries in containers.Just as heat seeps in during the blazing summer months, winter sends forth its icy fingers more readily into above-ground containers as well. If your winters are mild, there is little to worry about. If the temperatures stay in the twenties, or just dip into the upper teens for a short period, your plants will likely come out of the winter unscathed. If the temperatures drop out of the low twenties and stay there for a while, your plants can freeze straight through. That will surely kill them. So, if the forecast calls for cold, wrap your sleeping strawberries snugly with some insulating material and/or put them in the garage to provide them some shelter from the harsh bleakness of winter.Growing Strawberries in Containers: Concluding CommentsIf you follow the general principles for growing strawberries as described here, and you pay special attention to the tips and cautions mentioned above on this page, there is no reason your container strawberries can't perform just as well as in-ground strawberry plants. Just keep an eye on the little fellows a little more than you would the strawberries out in a garden. And, of course, good luck!This is a question submitted to StrawberryPlants.org by a reader. See the Strawberry FAQ for more questions and answers. Strawberries are extremely easy to grow. They don't require much maintenance and are one of the best plants to grow in grow bags. Growing your strawberries in grow bags provides several advantages over terra cotta or plastic pots and they can fit easily on your patio or balcony. While there is some basic care involved, growing your own strawberries can be a fun and relaxing hobby. If the thought of having your own strawberry home garden seems tempting, read on to find out all you need to know about how to grow strawberries in grow bags. About strawberries – What are strawberries? Strawberries are fruit that comes from a small flowering plant called Fragaria. The so called “fruit” is actually an enlarged flower called an achene. The name “strawberry” comes from the small “straw” shape of the achenes. They are among the most popular of all small fruit. Strawberries are distinguished from other strawberry varieties in that they have a thin, white layer on the exterior of the berry. It is this layer that makes them float when picked. The strawberry is classified as an annual plant and thrives best in a sunny location with lots of sun and rich soil. In a grow bag, strawberries can also be grown year round. Can I grow strawberries in a grow bag? Planting your strawberries in grow bags is likely to provide the best chances of success. Grow bags are made of fabric and provide just the right environment for plants to flourish. All you need to do is give them fertile, rich soil and a sunny placement. How many strawberry plants per grow bag? It is very important to plant the right number of strawberry plants in your grow bag so that your plants have the best chance of growing well. Strawberry plants are usually small and will easily fit in your grow bag. While you may be tempted to plant more in your grow bag, you must remember that like most plants, strawberry plants like to have the space to grow. To ensure that you have good, strong plants, you can plant 3 to 4 plants in a bag. This is important so that each of your plants gets the required volume of soil. It is imperative that there is no overcrowding. If you do plant more strawberry plants in your grow bag, they may grow lush and green, but they are likely to provide fewer strawberries. Photo by Heather Barnes on Unsplash The best grow bags for strawberries Once you have decided to grow your strawberries in a grow bag, you need to look for the best one. The best grow bags for strawberries are made of fabric. These bags are breathable, and allows good air circulation. A grow bag with a waterproof liner will keep water from leaking through the sides. You may have to move your grow bag, so look for one that has sturdy handles. Waxy fabric grow bags with their two-tone design and waterproof lining makes an ideal choice. What size grow bag for strawberries? There is a variety of bag sizes to choose from that come in various sizes and materials. Generally, the bags below two gallons are suitable for smaller plants that do not grow taller than 9.5 inches. Do not assume that a bigger grow bag will grow more strawberries. Also, keep in mind the space you have for the strawberry grow bag. For your strawberries, you can choose between the five and eight-gallon sizes. Either of these will give each of your strawberry plants sufficient space to grow and more soil nutrients per plant. What month is best to plant strawberries? The best time to plant strawberries is early spring, often March or April. The winter months are not a good time to plant strawberries as the ground is cold and wet. You can purchase fresh runners or those available in cold storage. Strawberry plants generally bear fruit two months after planting. What kind of soil is best for strawberries? Strawberries need rich soil that has sufficient amounts of organic matter and some acidic pH. The ideal pH range is 6.5 to 7. The best soil for your strawberries to grow well in your grow bag is a gardening mix as long as it is well drained. It usually has several materials mixed together to promote circulation, ensure drainage, and hold water. For best results, make sure that the soil is organically enriched and has a high content of organic matter. Compost or rotted manure should be added to the growing medium at a ratio of about one part compost to four parts soil. How many years does a strawberry plant last? A strawberry plant starts its life when a new plant is grown and reaches its peak in two or three years. If you keep your strawberry plants in ideal conditions, they can live for five or six years. Unfortunately, your strawberry plants will not last forever, and you will have to replace them after a few years. Do strawberry plants continue to produce fruit? Strawberry plants generally continue to produce fruit for five years. Often the initial two years will yield more fruit and then the quantity will start becoming less due to reasons such as diseases or pests. However, with suitable care, you can expect to continue getting fruit for five years. Can you eat first-year strawberries? Your strawberry plant may take a year to start producing fruit, but it may be somewhat sparse and sporadic. You can certainly eat your strawberries the first year. What is the best container to grow strawberries in? You can choose between four kinds of containers to grow strawberries. These include grow bags, individual pots, strawberry planters and hanging baskets. While each of these containers has its own advantages and disadvantages, more and more people are choosing grow bags. When thinking about how to grow strawberries in a grow bag, remember that grow bags are most likely to give you a successful strawberry growing experience. They provide a large volume of soil for each plant and require less watering as they keep the soil moist evenly. Where to get strawberry seeds? Photo by PAGAL PAGAL on Unsplash If you are a first-time strawberry planter, you can buy strawberry seeds from a nursery, your local gardening store or online. You can also harvest your own seeds though you may need to find out more about the process first. However, the most convenient option is to buy seedlings from the nursery. Strawberry plants often spread through runners. Once you have your strawberry grow bag garden up and running, you can continue to get new plants simply by clipping these. OUR TOP PICKS... Is potting soil good for strawberries? Strawberries grow best in organically rich, well-drained soil. You can use potting soil mixed with compost before placing it in your strawberry grow bag. To improve your soil quality further and add additional nutrients, add 10% each of nitrogen, potassium and phosphorus. How often should I water my strawberry plants? Strawberry plants in grow bags may require frequent watering. Water your plants until the water starts draining out from the bottom of the bag. However, water only when the soil feels dry on touching. The plants do need a lot of water; however, the roots are likely to rot if they get too much. You may need to water more often during the summer as the water will dry out sooner. Do strawberries come back every year? Strawberry plants may be ever-bearing or June-bearing. The first kind will continue to give you fruit over the summer months. The June-bearing will give you one large strawberry crop early in the summer. In either case, it depends on the quality of your seeds or seedlings. Always choose healthy plants and the best strategy is to get yours from a nursery. Final thoughts on growing strawberries in grow bags Strawberries are incredibly easy to grow in grow bags. They require minimal maintenance, can be grown on a patio or balcony, and will produce delicious fruit every year. Growing your own strawberries in grow bags is a rewarding hobby and it is simple enough for even the young beginner to learn. Have questions about growing strawberries in grow bags? Submit your questions and we'd be happy to help.

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