

Rework Strawberry Beds in Summer

The success of next year's strawberry crop is dependent upon the care of the planting following harvest. Beds should be renovated to ensure production of large, high quality berries. Renovation involves mowing off old leaves, thinning plants, fertilizing, and weeding.

Immediately following harvest, decide if the bed is worth saving. Severe problems of weed infestation or disease may warrant establishment of a new planting.

If foliar diseases were a problem this year, mow off the old leaves. Set the mower high enough to prevent injury to the crowns or main growing points. If the foliage looks good, this step may be avoided.

Narrow the rows to an 8-12 inch band. Cultivate on both sides of the row or on one side only. Tilling the soil adjacent to the row promotes rooting of developing runners. Young runner plants produce the main portion of next year's crop. A final density of 5-7 plants per square foot is desired.

For soils with good fertility, apply one pound of ammonium nitrate (33-0-0) per 100 feet of row. Poor soils may require a complete fertilizer such as 10-10-10 at a rate of 3-5 pounds per 100 feet of row. Apply fertilizer before rows are thinned so that it may be incorporated into the soil during cultivation.

Fertilize again in September just as flower buds for next year's crop are developing. Use 1 to 2 pounds of ammonium nitrate per 100 feet of row. Brush fertilizer granules off leaves to avoid plant injury and water thoroughly after application.

The strawberry planting should be watered thoroughly after renovation and during the summer months if necessary. Vigorous, well-maintained plants are essential to a good fruit crop the following spring.