

# Growing Strawberries

This succulent, fragrant fruit is as beautiful as it is flavourful. Traditionally the strawberry season is quite short with a six-week season from early May until late August. The use of polytunnels and glass houses has extended the strawberry season. Although strawberries will be in plentiful supply throughout May the season will reach its peak in June and July. If good weather continues from July you can expect to see British strawberries until the end of September.



1. Strawberries grown on farms in the UK grow on runners from a parent plant. It's quicker than growing from a seed. It takes five to six months for the baby strawberry plants to grow roots of their own and be ready to go to their own polytunnel.

2. Polytunnels are like big plastic greenhouses in the shape of a tube. Giant glass houses are also used. They let in lots of light but they keep the strawberries protected from the weather and help stop pests and diseases. Once the strawberries are planted they need to be watered every day. A special method called irrigation is used to water the soil using special pipes.

3. The following year the strawberry plants are mature enough to start to flower. Each flower can become a strawberry, but it needs to be pollinated by an insect. The insect pollinates the flower by crawling on it to get the nectar. At the same time it rubs the yellow pollen on to the inside parts of the flower. This is what makes the fruit start to grow.



4. Thirty days after being pollinated, the baby strawberries start to form. To start with they are small and green. As time passes and they get more water and sunshine the fruits begin to grow and turn red. The polytunnel stops the birds from eating the young fruits.

5. Nine months after being planted the first strawberries are ripe and ready for picking. Because strawberries are so delicate they are all picked by hand.

