

# The Strawberry Store, LLC

November 2010 Newsletter

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Since the last newsletter a lot has happened at The Strawberry Store. And, a lot is still going on. We are still shipping plants, mostly to coastal and southern states. We will continue shipping plants as long as the weather cooperates. We do want to note a couple of things about this.

This time of year here in Delaware, strawberry plant growth has slowed down due to much cooler temperatures. The soil they are in is low on nutrients, on purpose. This results in leaves of some varieties changing colors, just like the trees. They are not dead, just napping. If you order plants and plant them in cold ground they will continue to grow very slowly when conditions are acceptable. Most of the growth will be in the soil, though you might see a bit of growth above ground. As long as you can work the soil you can plant strawberries. Make sure and mulch them to protect them for winter. For more information about mulching and other subjects visit our blog at <http://blog.thestrawberrystore.com>.

If you live in a warmer state (you're very lucky and I'm jealous) you can still order and plant strawberry plants. They will "wake up" and start growing just like if it were spring. Most of the varieties of alpines that I sell are day neutral types and do not require a chilling period to set fruit for the next season. In fact, some are still blooming and setting fruit here in the nursery even though we had our first hard frost last night (November 3<sup>rd</sup>). In warmer climates this is an ideal time to grow strawberries. Some of these areas have their primary strawberry production in winter. Don't miss your chance to plant and grow some gourmet strawberries.

We ship plants most of the winter, even with snow on the ground. My wife is still amused when I dig plants from under the straw and snow and then ship the plants. She asks, "Are you shipping ice cubes again?" Many times the plants are still frozen when the postal person picks up the packages. They thaw on the way and begin growing again when planted in warm soil. We have never had a complaint about poor growth or production after shipping frozen plants.

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The next subject I want to tackle is “when to sow seeds”. We are already shipping seeds orders and I encourage you to order early. We are selling seed bulk this year. With brisk sales of larger quantities this year we expect to be sold out of seed at some point so get the seed early. Also, consider ordering early for another reason. It is a good idea to refreeze the seed for 3-4 weeks before you sow. The seed that is shipped out has been frozen but thaws out during shipment. It is a good idea to refreeze before sowing to maximize germination.

Now to the question of when to sow. I tell customers that the best time to sow is early January if you want fruit the same season. That is true only for more northerly growing areas. If you live in the South of West you should have sown seed weeks ago. Rather than telling you exactly when to sow I'll create a general rule of thumb. Sow seed 7-12 weeks before you want to transplant. Under ideal controlled conditions it takes seven weeks for small cells and 10 or more weeks before transplanting to larger cells or the garden. It takes at least 7 weeks to finish a 288 tray and 10 weeks for a 72 cell tray. I don't recommend transplanting 288 plugs directly to the garden. The smallest cell that I would transplant to the garden is a 72 cell plant. The larger the plant going into the garden the better. I say this because I hate to pull weeds. The smaller the plant the longer it will take for the plant to shade out or compete with weeds.

If you have specific questions about seeding or any other subject, please do contact me.

I should have announced this earlier but time got away from me. Next week I will be exhibiting at the Southeast Strawberry Expo in Virginia Beach, VA. The Expo is being held from Nov 8-10. Here's a link to info on the Expo: <http://www.ncstrawberry.org/docs/ExpoRegistrationWeb.pdf>. Please stop by. I'd love to meet and talk to you in person.

I want to give you a link to a new article that I just finished writing. It is titled *Growing Gourmet Strawberries Commercially*. Here is a link to download the article: <http://www.thestrawberrystore.com/GrowingGourmetStrawberriesCommercially.pdf>. I have been getting a lot of inquiries from growers, both home gardeners and commercial growers, who are thinking about growing gourmet types of strawberries on a larger scale. This is an introductory article. It was written to provoke thought on the subject. It does not get into the all important area of numbers, costs, profits, etc. I hope those reading it realize that growing a specialty crop like gourmet strawberries is something that should be attempted on a small scale initially and that the grower go into it with his or her eyes wide open. If you have acres of commercial hybrids already, you need to

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cautiously approach growing gourmet strawberries. The last thing you want to do it to introduce new issues into your operation.

I hope to have more information published on commercial production of gourmet strawberries in the near future. The winter is a good time for me to write. I am also working on a book but will try to get something out this winter on commercial production of gourmet strawberries.

A new category on the shopping cart is called "TSS Growing System". I want to especially point out the white fabric containers that we are now offering. We have been testing fabric containers for over a year. We have found them in general to be an excellent container. Summer survival is greatly improved in the heat. We had several days here in Delaware over 100 degrees. These high temperatures take their toll on a cool season crop like strawberries. These temperatures are a huge challenge for any grower.

The white ones that we now offer cool the soil two ways, physically by being white and through evaporative cooling. The white ones also help to retain more moisture than the black fabric containers sold by several suppliers. The results were so encouraging that we wanted to start offering them right away. Our testing continues on various sizes of these white fabric containers. Also note the review of this product on the shopping cart by a grower in Florida.

Finally, I wanted to mention that we are now offering a special gift, in the category, gifts of course. Don't overlook the opportunity to give the gift of a plant in a galvanized tin bucket for the holidays, birthdays and other special days. They also make great centerpieces and favors for weddings, etc. We have a very limited quantity for this winter.

I don't know when the next newsletter will be written. Until then, have a good fall, what's left of it. Contact me if I can be of assistance.

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