

## How do I grow Strawberries in my AeroGarden?

Strawberries love growing in the AeroGarden! The most practical way to grow them is by starting with small live plants. You could have fruit in as little as seven or eight weeks!

Here's what you will need to begin:

- An AeroGrow "Grow Anything Kit" (formerly known as the Master Gardener kit)
- Strawberry "starts" - available online or at your local nursery (seasonally). We have found that "Tri-Star" or "Tristar" is a readily available variety that performs well in the AeroGarden.

Here's what to do:

- 1) Rinse off all the dirt from the strawberry roots with room temperature water.
- 2) If the roots are small, use scissors to cut a wet grow sponge down half of its length (more if the roots are long) and gently insert the roots into the grow sponge. If the root mass is too big to insert into the grow sponge, then just insert the roots directly into the plastic grow basket.
- 3) The "crown of the plant - the growing tip - should be above the top of the grow sponge.



- 4) Insert the grow sponge through the grow basket label, if you are using one, and then insert the grow basket into the grow deck of the AeroGarden.
- 5) After you have planted all of your strawberry starts, add the contents of one 8ml nutrient packet (use half in a 3 pod AeroGarden) into the AeroGarden bowl and reset the nutrient timer. You should see new growth on your strawberry plants in 7-10 days!
- 6) When your nutrient timer comes on in two weeks, add nutrients as instructed and reset the timer. For subsequent feedings, use two 5.5 ml packets per feeding.

What's next? Tending and harvesting your strawberry garden! A little bit of care for your strawberries will ensure rapid growth and bountiful harvests. As your plants grow, you will start to see flowers, and before long you'll be harvesting your first crop of ripe, luscious strawberries.

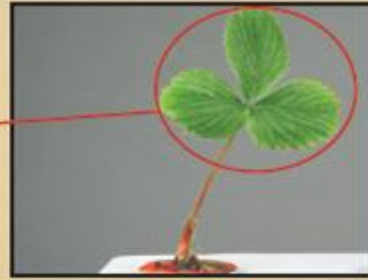
Here's how to get the most from your plants:

- Keep the water topped up.
- Raise the grow lights as the plants grow, keep them 1-2 inches above the top of the plants.
- Prune your strawberry plants. Here's how: (scroll down)

Cutting off the early flowers will help your plants produce large quantities of delicious strawberries.

### Pruning Flowers

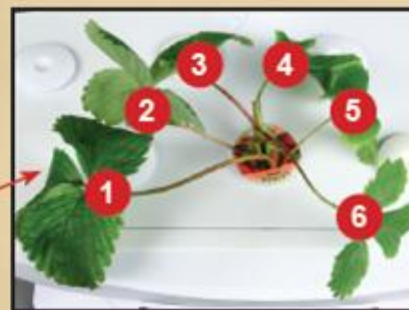
- Remove flowers from plants that have fewer than 6 leaf sets. A leaf set is a stem with 3 leaves (shown at right).



- Cut the flower stem at its base. Notice that there are 4 leaf sets on this plant.

- Continue cutting flowers until the plant has 6 full leaf sets.

*This is what your strawberry plant might look like with 6 leaf sets.*



- Pollinate strawberry flowers:

In nature, pollination is done by the bees and the wind. Indoors, your strawberry plants depend on you to pollinate them.

You will need to start pollinating your plants regularly once you allow the flowers to remain on the plants.



- 1** Gently place an open hand inside the strawberry plant branches.
- 2** Move your hand rapidly back and forth about 10 times to shake the plant. This movement will spread the pollen, though you will not be able to see it moving.
- 3** Repeat steps 1 and 2 for each strawberry plant a few times a week.

*Special Note: Some people are allergic to the pollen in strawberry flowers. If you think you may be sensitive to the pollen, we recommend you use disposable gloves and a mask when pollinating your plants to avoid touching and/or inhaling the pollen.*

- Keep your strawberry garden healthy:

**Keeping a watchful eye on your Garden is not only a joy, but also a smart way to make sure your plants stay healthy.**

As your strawberry plants grow, the older leaves will start to brown and die. This is perfectly normal.

- Remove brown and dead leaves by cutting with scissors at the base of the stem.
- Keep the *Grow Surface* clear of dead leaves.



- Plant problems and remedies: (scroll down)

These pictures show plants that are stressed. Follow the suggestions to restore your Garden's health.



**Monkey Face**

This often occurs on the fruit from the first set of flowers. For later fruit, strawberries with crevassed surfaces indicate that the flowers are not sufficiently pollinated. Pollinate plants as described on page 14 of this Guide.



**Burned**

Strawberry plant is too close to the *Grow Bulbs*. Raise the *Lamp Hood*.



**Wilted**

Strawberry plant is not getting enough water. Check water level. If water level is okay, please see page 26 for other possible reasons why water isn't flowing.

- Harvest your strawberries:

A strawberry is ready for picking when it is bright red all over. Your strawberries will be their sweetest when picked at just the right time.



**Underripe** – fruit is still green and/or light red.



**Ripe Stage** – bright red and shiny.



**Overripe Stage** –darker/dull red and some browning.

Once you've determined that a strawberry is ripe and ready to harvest, here's what to do:

- Hold the strawberry loosely in your palm.
- Grasp the stem (slightly above the berry) between thumb and pointer finger.
- Snap the stem between fingers. You can also use scissors to harvest your strawberries.



- Rinse and refill the AeroGarden bowl at least monthly – very important for best growth and fruiting! The easiest way to do this is as follows:

1. Unplug the AeroGarden.
2. Remove the Bowl from the Base.
3. Pour or siphon all the water/nutrient solution out of the Bowl as follows:
  - **If your plants are still small** and without much root mass, you can generally just lift the Bowl off the Base, open the view door at the front, and carefully pour all the water out into a sink.
  - **If your plants have grown larger** and have a lot of root mass, lifting the Grow Surface with all the mature plants in it may be impractical, and it is easier to siphon the water out of the Bowl into a sink or a bucket. Press "Ctrl" and click [here](#) to purchase a siphon.
    - **Note:** Do not use the water from the Bowl on houseplants - the solution may be too concentrated for them.
4. Replace the Grow Surface into the Bowl (if you removed it).
5. Fill the Bowl with fresh water up to the "Fill to Here" mark.
6. Feed with two new nutrient packets.
7. Replace the Bowl back into the Base. (Whenever you do this, make sure to lower the Bowl down onto the Base so that you do not damage the Pump contacts on the front of the Lamp Arm.
8. Plug the AeroGarden back in.
9. Briefly press the Reset button. (This will reset the nutrient timer to be in synch with your new feeding date).