

If you remain a stubborn traditionalist and stick with strawberries, try both the June and everbearing varieties in your jar. Surecrop and Catskill are outstanding in the first category; Ozark Beauty and Superfection, in the second. Then there are also French or Alpine wild strawberries, which are perfect in jars because they produce no runners, yet still produce delicious fruits. Avoid the climbing strawberries whose runners are best tied to a trellis, not cascading from a jar.

Because strawberries are prone to disease, you'll have better results with a sterile, soilless potting mix that is rich, light-textured, and well-drained. Strawberries prefer full sun, although the wild type will be happy in woodland-like half shade.

Plant the jar following the same method as for annuals, with the crown of the plants nearly level with the vertical soil surface. Apply a balanced fertilizer, such as 10-10-10, about six weeks after planting.

When autumn leaves start to fall, move the jar to a protected spot, such as a garage, basement, or tool shed, where the soil won't freeze. Mulch each pocket and the top with pine branches or straw. Bring the jar back out in spring after frost has left the air. In spring, top-dress with well-rotted cow manure or other fertilizer. For good-looking plants, replant the jar every two years, or use everbearing types.

Whether filled with strawberries or flowers, a large strawberry jar should have a central core of sand, gravel, or screening mesh, so water will readily reach the bottom plants.