

Growing bee-friendly plants

Strawberries are really easy to grow in all sorts of containers – pots, hanging baskets and even... old wellies! There are lots of different varieties of strawberry to try and require minimum care to grow. Strawberries provide excellent opportunities for older generations to reminisce, and for younger participants to link the food we eat back to its roots – where and how it is grown. Give this growing activity a go... strawberries not only taste delicious they are a super plant to grow for bees and other pollinators like wasps too!

Bees are vital to our climate – they help farmers and growers produce one third of the food we eat. They help pollinate crops, not only on big farms but also in our allotments, gardens and open spaces.

We can all do our bit to help the bees and plant bee friendly crops and flowers such as tomatoes, blueberries, apples, sunflowers, beans and lots more. One easy crop to grow, which is delicious to eat too is strawberries.



Materials and equipment

- Gloves –size appropriate for all participants
- Scoops/trowels – size appropriate for all participants
- Re-useable cloths for tables
- Old wellies
- Gravel or stones
- Peat-free compost (from garden centre)
- Strawberry plants (standard or alpine)

If you grow strawberries from seed you will have to wait a year to see fruit as the plants need their first year to grow and store energy. But once cultivated they will come back for several years and fruit.

Preparation

1. Get everyone involved right from the very start! Divide up the shopping and preparation tasks between the older and younger generations.
2. Prepare the activity area and put cloths on the tables.
 - a. make sure there's plenty of space for everyone to sit at the table, in chairs or wheelchairs, and the surface is at the right height even for the smallest of participants! You may want to add in some cushions to boost on seats, or raise the table if people find they are bending.
 - b. keep a dustpan handy to clean up any spilt compost
 - c. set out equipment and materials according to group size and who can do what
 - d. prepare for hand washing/cleansing with a wipe/using gloves as suited to the participants
 - e. gather resources to help provoke conversation and stimulate memory. Recipe books and pictures of strawberry food related products can help the older participants to reminisce and share their knowledge and recipes with younger participants. They may have the best strawberry jam recipe, or some great gardening tips to share!

Generate conversation, reminisce and explore sensory experiences

- How are strawberries grown? Take a look at some photos showing old and new ways.
- Does anyone grow strawberries at home, or did they as a child?
- How you like to eat strawberries? (Cream, whole, jam, jelly, ice-cream, trifle, Knickerbocker glory etc.)
- Do you, or did you used to, pick wild strawberries from the hedgerow? They have a beautiful perfume flavour all of their own!
- How do strawberries smell? What feelings or memories do they evoke?
- How do supermarket strawberries differ from home grown?



Session plan

1. Make everyone comfortable at the table, wearing gloves and plasters if any cuts.
2. Introduce the activity – clearly explain what is being planted, talk about strawberries and link to relevant cooking and farming activities you've done together.
3. Select your welly and put a few stones or some gravel in the foot of the welly for drainage. This also acts as a way of adding weight to stop the welly falling over.

TIP: For extra drainage put a few holes in the bottom of the wellies. You can also cut extra slits into the sides of each welly to fit more plants in.

4. Fill the welly with some potting compost, up to just below your first slit or the top if you haven't added slits. Place in a strawberry plant, add some more compost to the next slit, add another strawberry plant and so on to about 3cm below the top of the welly. You can then plant your last strawberry plant at the top.

5. Sprinkle some gravel on top of the compost. This stops it drying out too much if it gets hot and prevents the compost splashing up when watered.

TIP: As an alternative to wellies, you can use bright coloured plastic colanders as hanging baskets!

6. Clear the tables and put everything away. Put the strawberry wellies outside.
7. Wait, and watch the plants grow together! You can bring the group together to check in on the plants regularly, and enjoy the fruits of your labour!



Why not try using colanders instead of wellies? They make great hanging baskets!

Opportunities for all

FOR THOSE WHO CAN PARTICIPATE WELL

There are lots of hands-on opportunities for those who can get involved. For children and older adults who find things easier, why not pair them up with a less able participant? They can also help distribute equipment and materials and decant gravel and compost into smaller manageable quantities/containers. They can keep an eye out for anyone struggling

to bend and lift. They can supervise those who find it tricky to cut and fill the wellies.

FOR THOSE WITH SOME LIMITS TO PARTICIPATION

Offer more step-by-step support. - 'Raise' the ground by using tables to put the containers/bags on. Have chairs or perching stools for the participants to use if they need to. Use plastic potting trays with sides to

empty the compost into prior to planting the wellies so it is easier to scoop.

FOR THOSE WITH SEVERE LIMITS TO PARTICIPATION

Have pictures of the activity and make sure verbal instructions are clear. As above, but use hands to scoop compost if it is difficult to hold a scoop. Smelling strawberries and holding plants, pressing the compost down.

Other ideas for extending opportunities

- Taste strawberry tea
- Have a strawberry tasting session using different varieties
- Experiment with strawberry recipes such as smoothies, ice-cream and jam
- Visit a pick-your-own farm together
- After you have harvested your strawberries they will produce new plants on runners. You can pot these up and sell them at events, or give them to family, teachers or friends
- Link your strawberry welly growing with a farm visit and cooking activities.

About this resource:

Think this resource packs some welly? Learn more about **growing in urban spaces**, and **how to create a wildlife haven at home**. For more tips check out this **gardening for beginners video series**, get green-fingered with these guides to **growing herbs** and **fruit** or have some fun outdoors by **building your own den!**

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