



Webster County Acreage Living

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Strawberries

Information provided by Richard Jauron, ISU Dept. of Horticulture

Fresh strawberries are irresistible. They taste great on cereal, yogurt, pancakes, and ice cream. They also make terrific jams, jellies, and pies.

Strawberries are perfect for home gardens. They are hardy, easy to grow, and produce good with moderate effort. April to early May is the best time to plant strawberries in Iowa.

There are three types of strawberries for the home garden.

1. June-bearers are the most widely planted type of strawberry. They produce one crop per year, the majority of fruit ripening in June.
2. Everbearing varieties typically produce June and late summer/early fall crops with little flowering or fruiting in the intervening weeks.
3. Day-neutral varieties can flower and fruit throughout the growing season if temperatures are moderate. Flower and fruit production stop during hot weather.

Planting sites should receive at least 6 hours of direct sunlight per day and have well-drained soil. Do not plant strawberries in areas that are

heavily infested with perennial weeds. Also avoid sites where strawberries, tomatoes, potatoes, and peppers have been grown the last two years to prevent possible root disease problems.

Purchase virus-free strawberry plants from a reputable garden center or mail-order company.

When ready to plant, trim off the older leaves, place the roots of plants in water for an hour, and then plant immediately. Set each plant in the ground so the crown of the plant is even with the soil surface.

June-bearing strawberries should be planted 18 to 24 inches apart in rows spaced 4 feet apart. Runners will develop and root freely to form a matted row about 2 feet wide.

Everbearing and day-neutral strawberries are typically planted in beds consisting of 2 or 3 rows. Rows are spaced 1 foot apart and plants are spaced 1 foot apart within the rows. Any runners that develop on everbearing or day-neutral plants should be removed.

Immediately after planting, water the strawberry plants and apply a starter fertilizer solution to aid establishment. (A starter solution can

be prepared by dissolving 1 or 2 tablespoons of an all-purpose garden fertilizer, such as 10-10-10, in one gallon of water.) Apply 1 to 2 cups to each plant.

During the first growing season all the blossoms should be removed from June-bearing strawberries. Remove all blossoms on everbearing and day-neutral strawberries until early July. Any flowers which bloom after this period may be allowed to develop into fruit. Flower removal aids plant establishment.

When properly planted and given good care, one strawberry plant can yield 1 to 1 1/2 quarts of fruit.



Strawberry-Rhubarb-Pineapple Sauce

Ingredients:

- 8 oz. can crushed or tidbit pineapple—do NOT drain
- 1 lb fresh rhubarb, cut in 1/2 inch pieces (3 cups)
- 1 cup sliced strawberries (fresh or frozen)

In a medium sauce pan stir together pineapple, rhubarb & strawberries. Bring to boil; reduce heat & simmer about 5 minutes or until rhubarb is tender. Serve warm or cover & refrigerate about 3 hours until chilled. Can serve on top of cake, ice cream or chicken. *Recipe from Jan Temple, ISU Nutrition & Health Field Specialist.*

Time of Transfer Inspection Program

Information provided by Gary Boerner, Webster County Sanitarian, 515-574-3801

What may be of interest to those of you with septic systems is a new law, Senate File 261, which goes into effect on July 1, 2009. This law requires a septic inspection before a building being served by a septic system can be transferred to a new owner. The recorder will not record a deed until an inspection has been done or provisions made for a future inspection and necessary repairs are completed. If weather or other conditions prevent an inspection, the buyer must have a binding contract to have an inspection and/or repairs at the first opportunity.

The law requires the septic tank to be opened and the contents pumped, or as an alternative, the tank will not have to be pumped if the owner can provide evidence that the tank was pumped by a licensed commercial septic tank pumper within three years prior to the inspection and also

has documentation of the size and condition of the tank and its components.

If a septic system is failing to ensure effective wastewater treatment, or is otherwise improperly functioning, the septic system will be renovated to meet current construction regulations either by the seller, or by agreement, within a reasonable time period determined by the county, by the buyer. If the system is properly treating the wastewater and not creating an unsanitary condition at the time of inspection, the system is not required to meet current construction regulations. For example, a septic tank draining into a tile line is not acceptable and a new system will have to be installed. But a system that does not meet today's regulations for total length of leach field, but is still effectively treating the wastewater, will not have to

meet current construction regulations.

The inspection will be conducted by an inspector certified by the Department of Natural Resources. An inspection is valid for two years for any ownership transfers during that period. There are some transfer exceptions that do not require an inspection such as foreclosure, bankruptcy, joint tenants, divorce, and family.

You can find the inspection procedure on the Iowa Department of Natural Resources' website: www.iowadnr.gov/ Go to Water Related issues, then Private Septic Systems, and then to Time of Transfer Program. Scroll down to Links where you will find Chapter 69 of the Iowa Administrative Code.

Injured and Abandoned Wildlife

Information provided by Jason O'Brien, ISU Extension Wildlife Field Specialist

ISU Extension Wildlife Programs receive numerous calls each year from people who have discovered an injured or abandoned wild animal. This often occurs in late spring to mid-summer when most wildlife young are born or hatched.

Some people think that because the young animal is on its own, its parents have abandoned it. In reality, some wildlife parents do leave their young in order to forage for food and not all baby wildlife is helpless.

The best thing to do when you discover young wildlife is to be patient and watch until the parent or parents

return, which they nearly always do. Any involvement of ours is likely to do more harm than good.

Of course, accidents do happen, such as nests and dead trees that blow down in a storm or a landowner who removes a dead tree without realizing there is a family of squirrels or raccoons using it. In cases such as with a fallen nest and its young, you may simply be able to put it or its young back in the tree. With other situations, while it is hard to hear sometimes, it may be appropriate to allow nature to take its course.

Invariably, some wildlife is injured and in this case, you may wish to contact a licensed wildlife rehabilitator. The closest licensed wildlife rehabilitator to Webster County would be the Boone Wildlife Research Station (515-432-2823).

Remember—your safety first. Be careful when approaching or handling injured animals.



N.O.A.A. Weather Radios

Information provided by Tony Jorgensen, Webster County Emergency Management Agency

It is that time again when severe weather can happen at any time. Already in March we have had tornadoes touchdown in Iowa.

Along with smoke detectors and Carbon Monoxide detectors, every home should have a NOAA Weather Radio. NOAA Weather Radios broadcast weather watches, warnings, forecasts and other emergency information 24 hours a day, and can also be placed in an alert mode that keeps the radio quiet until an alert is issued.

With Iowa's often severe and rapidly changing weather, the early notification that NOAA Weather Radios provide can save lives. The NOAA radio tower based in Webster County provides excellent reception throughout and beyond our county.

Are Easter Eggs Safe?

Information provided by the USDA Food Safety & Inspection Service, www.fsis.usda.gov/Fact_Sheets/Focus_On_Shell_Eggs/index.asp

Sometimes eggs are decorated, used as decorations, and hunted at Easter. Here are some safety tips for Easter eggs.

- **Dyeing eggs:** After hard cooking eggs, dye them and return them to the refrigerator within 2 hours. If eggs are to be eaten, use a food-safe coloring. As with all foods, persons dyeing the eggs should wash their hands before handling the eggs.
- **Blowing out eggshells:** Because some raw eggs may contain Salmonella, you must use caution when blowing out the contents to hollow out the shell for decorating. Use only eggs that have been kept refrigerated and are uncracked. To destroy bacteria that may be present on the surface of the egg, wash the egg in hot water and then rinse in a solution of 1 teaspoon liquid chlorine bleach per half cup of water. After blowing out the egg, refrigerate the contents and use within 2 to 4 days.
- **Hunting eggs:** Hard-cooked eggs for an egg hunt

In addition to weather information, NOAA Weather Radios transmit other emergency information. Through our partnership with the National Weather Service, county emergency management coordinators can send emergency information regarding non-weather emergencies, such as hazardous materials spills and releases.

The new generations of NOAA Weather Radios have S.A.M.E. (Specific Area Message Encoding) technology, which allows the user to set the radio to receive alerts for only a specific area, and to bypass alerts that are not of interest to the user.

When purchasing a NOAA Weather Radio, be sure it has S.A.M.E. technology and a battery backup.

must be prepared with care to prevent cracking the shells. If the shells crack, bacteria could contaminate the inside. Eggs should be hidden in places that are protected from dirt, pets, and other sources of bacteria. The total time for hiding and hunting eggs should not exceed 2 hours. The "found" eggs must be re-refrigerated and eaten within 7 days of cooking.



Natural Easter Egg Dyes

Simmer eggs in water to cover for 20 minutes with 1 tsp. of vinegar and on of the following:

- Yellow Delicious apple peels
- Fresh beets
- Cranberries
- Blueberries
- Strong coffee
- Orange peels
- Spinach leaves
- Carrot tops

Questions Asked During the Months of April & May

Q. What would be a good site for a vegetable garden?

A. Vegetables grow best in a well-drained, fertile soil. The garden site should also receive at least 6 hours of direct sun each day. Avoid shady sites near large trees and shrubs. Most vegetable crops will not produce well if they don't receive sufficient sunlight. The site should also be fairly level to avoid soil erosion problems and free of difficult-to-control weeds.

Q. When should I remove the mulch from my strawberries?

A. To determine when to remove the mulch, periodically examine the strawberry plants in early April. Remove the mulch from the strawberry planting when about 25% of the plants are producing new growth. New growth will be white or yellow in color.

Q. Why does my crabapple tree bloom profusely every other year?

A. Some trees, such as fruit trees and crabapples, bloom heavily one year and then sparsely the following year. Hand thinning of excess fruit on fruit trees will help to overcome this tendency to flower and bear fruit in alternate years. "Bob White", "David", "Mary Potter" and "Red Splendor" are four crabapple varieties that tend to flower heavily in alternate years.

Q. I want to plant a new asparagus bed this spring. When can I start harvesting it?

A. Asparagus should not be harvested during the first growing season. This one year period allows the plants to become established in the garden. The asparagus can be harvested for two to four weeks in the second year, four to six weeks in the third year, and six to eight weeks in the fourth and following years.

Q. What is the proper way to plant a balled and burlapped tree?

A. Dig a hole that is two to three times wider than the diameter of the tree's rootball. The depth of the hole should be 2 or 3 inches less than the height of the rootball. Slope the sides of the hole so the top of the hole is several inches wider than the bottom.

Grasping the tree's rootball, carefully lower the tree into the hole. The top of the rootball should be approximately 2 or 3 inches above the surrounding soil line. Make sure the trunk is straight. Then begin backfilling with the original soil. Do not add compost, peat, or other organic materials to the soil. Gently firm the backfill soil in the hole with your hands.

When the planting hole is one-half full, cut and remove all twine, and cut away and remove the burlap on the top 1/3 to 1/2 of the rootball. If the rootball is in a wire basket, remove the top 1/3 to 1/2 of the basket. Completely fill the remainder of the hole with soil. Place soil up to the top of the rootball and gradually slope it down to the surrounding soil line. Once planted, thoroughly water the tree.

Q. How high should I mow my lawn this spring?

A. Mow Kentucky bluegrass lawns at a height of 2.5 to 3 inches in the spring. When mowing the lawn, remove no more than 1/3 of the total leaf area at any one time. For example, if the lawn is being mowed at a height of 3 inches, the grass should be cut when it is 4.5 inches tall. Depending on weather conditions and fertilization practices, it may be necessary to mow bluegrass lawns every four to five days in the spring.

