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A STRAWBERRY BARREL

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By R. Ralph Clark

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CONSTRUCTION AND MAINTENANCE OF A STRAWBERRY BARREL

by

R. Ralph Clark  
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The home gardener who has limited space can raise strawberries of fine quality in a barrel filled with good soil. Such a barrel can be an ornament and useful in the landscape plan. The methods of constructing such a barrel will differ somewhat, but, in general, the following plan of procedure will enable anyone to construct a barrel that will grow strawberries in this way.

The Barrel: Use a solid oak barrel or any other good material. Bore two or three holes in the bottom of the barrel for drainage purposes. A  $1\frac{1}{2}$  to 2 inch auger is best for this purpose. With this same auger bore a series of holes from 9 to 12 inches apart in the sides of the barrel, about 6 to 8 inches above the bottom. Now about 6 to 8 inches above this, another series of holes can be made, having the holes staggered with those made below. This process of boring holes should be repeated until the last series is placed some 6 to 8 inches from the top of the barrel. The barrel will last longer if the inside and freshly cut surfaces are painted with a creosote paint.

Turning the Barrel: In order to have a uniform growth and fruit production, it is best to have some method of easily turning the barrel. Turning should be done frequently so that all plants get an equal amount of sunshine. This can be accomplished by mounting the barrel on a large set of casters or rollers, a turn-table of an old clothes reel, or an old wheel of some kind, which is mounted on an axle or pipe embedded in a plank or concrete base.

Plants: Large, healthy plants should be used, but if they cannot be obtained, sometimes two small plants can be used for each opening. Trim off all large leaves before planting. Varieties to be used would include any of the ever-bearing plants recommended for regular field plantings.

Soil: A good grade of sandy loam soil is best for this purpose. It should be well supplied with organic matter and fairly fertile for best results.

Filling the Barrel: It is a good plan to put a small amount of gravel or broken crockery in the bottom of the barrel before starting to fill in the soil. This aids in the drainage of excess water.

As the soil is filled in, it should be packed rather firmly in order that it will not settle too much when watered. When the soil comes up to the first series of holes nearest the bottom, the young strawberry plants should be placed on the soil inside the barrel and carefully drawn through the holes so that the crowns will protrude from the barrel. The roots are then ready for spreading and embedding in the soil. The same procedure is followed as fast as the soil is built up to the different series of holes. Finally, several plants may be set in the soil on top of the barrel.

Watering and Aeration: When the barrel is filled approximately 1/3 full of soil, provision must be made for watering and aerating this lower level of soil. This is done by placing in the center at this time a three to four inch tile, metal pipe or wooden channel long enough to extend up even with the top of the barrel and with sufficient perforations to allow for the circulation of both air and water.

When the planting is finished, the soil should be thoroughly watered by running a hose into the open center filling it full of water. Watering should be done often enough so that the soil will remain fairly moist, but not become water-logged.

Fertilizing: Small amounts of well rotted manure may be put in the water pipe from time to time where it will dissolve and be carried by the water to the plants. A complete commercial fertilizer can be handled in the same way if care is taken not to use large amounts or put it in too often. A handful or two put in every two to three weeks should keep the plants growing very nicely.