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Strawberry Production in Small Areas

R. Ralph Clark

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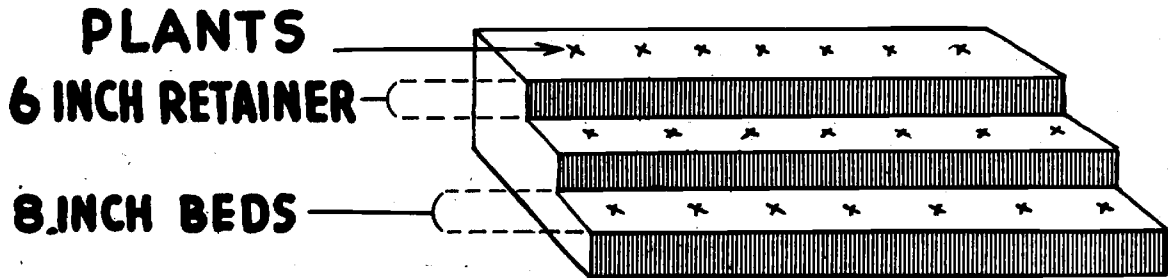


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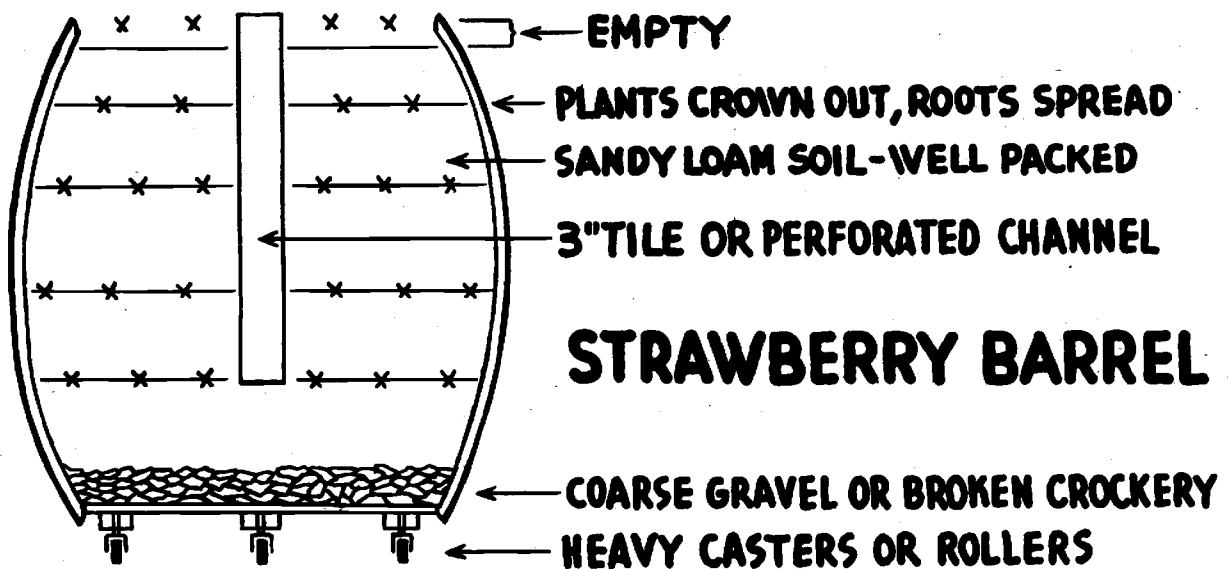
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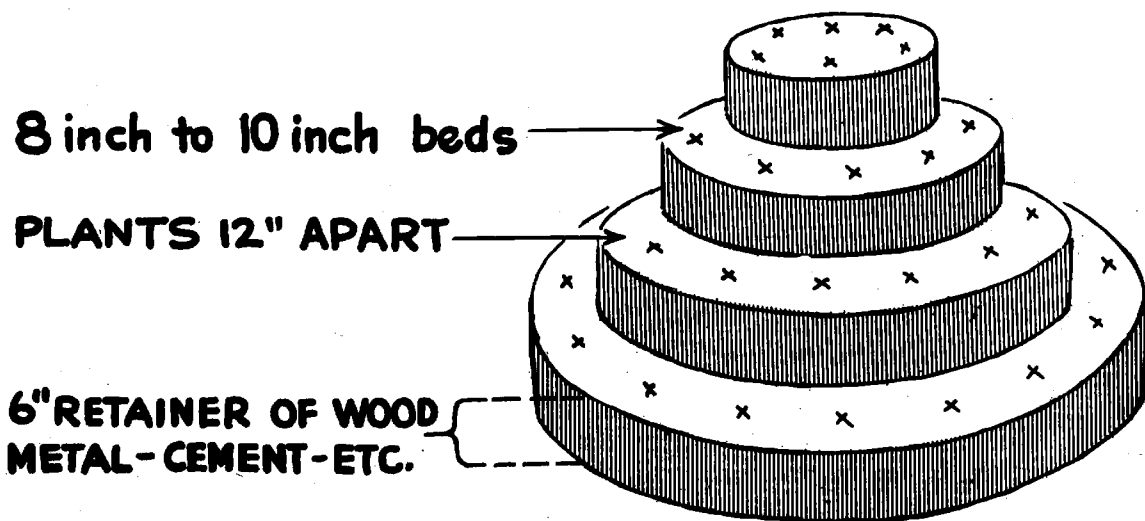
STRAWBERRY BEDS FOR SMALL AREAS



TERRACED BED



STRAWBERRY BARREL



PYRAMID BED

STRAWBERRY PRODUCTION IN SMALL AREAS

By R. Ralph Clark
Extension Horticulturist

The home gardener can raise strawberries in a small space. Many city dwellers wish to raise them for pleasure as well as for the fruit produced. Barrels, pyramids and terraced beds are used for plantings of this type. If properly handled the plants bear fruit of good quality and production is satisfactory. These small plantings can be quite ornamental as well as productive in the backyard landscaping.

The Strawberry Barrel:

Use an oak barrel or one of any other solid material. Bore two or three holes in the bottom of the barrel. A $1\frac{1}{2}$ - or 2-inch auger is best for this purpose. With the same auger bore a series of holes 10 to 12 inches apart in the sides of the barrel and 6 to 8 inches up from the bottom. Now about 6 to 8 inches above this make another series of holes which are staggered about three inches from the holes below. This process should be repeated until the last series of holes is 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 copperized wood preservative. This material is available at stores handling spray supplies.

Turning the Barrel:

In order to have 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 from an old clothes reel, or an old wheel mounted on an axle or pipe embedded in a plank or concrete base.

Plants:

Large, healthy plants should be used for best results. Trim off all large leaves before planting. Useful varieties would include any of the everbearing plants recommended for regular field plantings in your area. Early spring planting is preferred.

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 place a small amount of gravel or broken crockery in the bottom of the barrel before starting to fill it with soil. This aids in the drainage of excess water.

* This circular is revised from and is to supersede Extension Circular 481, now out of print.

As the soil is filled in, it should be packed rather firmly to prevent excessive settling when watered. When the soil reaches up to the first series of holes, a young strawberry plant should be placed on the soil at each hole so the crown protrudes from the barrel. The roots are then spread and embedded in the soil. The same procedure is followed as fast as the soil is built up to each series of holes. Finally, four or five plants can be set in the top of the barrel.

Watering and Aeration:

When the barrel is filled approximately one-third full of soil, provision must be made for watering and aerating this lower level of soil. This is done by placing on end in the center of the barrel a 3- or 4-inch tile, metal pipe, or wooden channel long enough to extend up even with the surface. There should be sufficient perforations in this to allow for the circulation of both air and water.

When planting is finished the soil should be thoroughly moistened by running an open hose into the open center, filling it with water. This should be done often enough to keep the soil fairly moist but not water-logged.

Fertilization:

Small amounts of well-rotted manure may be put in the water pipe from time to time during the spring and summer. 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 to not use large amounts or use it too often. A handful or two put in every two to three weeks should keep the plants growing very nicely.

Winter Protection:

If weather is severe the barrel should be moved into a building or wrapped with several inches of straw or evergreen boughs. This will prevent hard freezing or alternate freezing and thawing.

Pyramid and Terraced Beds:

These beds are made in a wide variety of shapes. Metal, wood, concrete, or almost any material can be used for construction of the retaining walls.

The beds are usually 3 to 12 inches wide and 6 to 8 inches above the one immediately below. One row of plants, spaced 10 to 12 inches apart, is used in each bed.

Terraced beds usually require a little more room than a barrel. They normally are more productive and are easier to make and care for.

Soil, fertilizer, location, and plants would be the same as for the barrel.

Insect Control:

Slug and weevil bait should be sprinkled around among the plants during May and June. Applications should be made often enough so that there is always some present during the period of activity of these pests.

When spittle bugs are noted the plants should be thoroughly dusted with rotenone powder. Best control is achieved by using fresh powder, as rotenone tends to break down when kept from year to year. More permanent control may be had by dusting with 5 per cent methoxychlor, but in backyard areas where children are in frequent contact with the plants methoxychlor is not recommended.

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