

Strawberries



Larger image courtesy of Robbie Murphy

Wild Strawberry

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Scientific Name: *Fragaria vesca*

Irish Name: Sú talún fhiáin

Strawberries grow wild in Ireland, though they are much smaller than the cultivated varieties and are deliciously sweet. Wild Strawberries can be found in hedges, banks and woodland edges. They flower from May to August, with fruit appearing a few weeks after flowering.

Strawberries, believe it or not, belong to the Rose family. They are perennial plants, which

means they die back each year and appear again year after year. The plants reproduce by sending out runners - small plants on long stems. When these small plants touch the ground, they form roots, the stem dies away and a new plant is produced.

Strawberries have buttercup-like flowers, each with five white petals and a yellow centre and the leaves come in threes. This flower, once pollinated, will produce the delicious fruit that we all love to eat. The "seeds" on the outside of the strawberry are actually tiny dried fruits, each of which contains a seed inside. The red flesh of the strawberry is really a fleshy part of the stem, called the receptacle, which holds the female reproductive organ of the plant, known as the ovary.

Growing Strawberries

The strawberry plants that produce the fruit we buy in shops, are plants that have been specially developed to produce fruit that will appeal to the buyer. Growers try to grow strawberries that have a good colour and shape, that smell good and most importantly are juicy and taste good. Not only this, the grower will also want each plant to produce a good crop of strawberries.

Some strawberries are grown outside in the field, others are grown in polytunnels, which help to lengthen the growing season.



Strawberry Delight!

Strawberries are used in many foods. We eat them on their own, in jams, yoghurts, ice creams, cereals, sweets and much more! In the summer months, when strawberries are plentiful, there may be too many to eat in one go! To have the taste of strawberries all the year round, they can be preserved into jams, frozen or freeze-dried.



The Strawberry Tree

Unfortunately you won't find strawberries on a strawberry tree! However, its fruit does resemble miniature strawberries and are edible, though they are not particularly tasty. The Strawberry Tree is a shrub, or small tree, and is part of the heather family. It is popular in gardens and is native to a small area of SW Ireland, as well as southern Europe.



Fruit on a Strawberry Tree

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