



Gourmet Berry News™

Catching Up

We are finally seeing signs of spring. I saw the first honey bees out today and my mason bees are emerging. There's not many flowers for them to forage on except some tiny weeds.

We are shipping plugs pretty regularly now and seed orders are pouring in. Offshore sales are brisk to Australia, UK, France, Germany, etc. It's funny that alpine strawberries originated in Europe but the cultivars available there seem to be limited.

We added shopping carts to a number of sites that before now were used to supply information and to generate traffic for our primary ecommerce sites. A list of some of these sites can be found below in the section on discounts. Customers can now buy seeds and plants on most of our sites.

The alpine strawberry market is beginning to mature and seems to be hitting the mainstream. It's been a long road. A number of plug producers are growing them including the one that is growing for us. Landscape architects are contacting us for information and availability. I'm hearing from customers that garden centers are starting to carry alpines. This is truly a good sign.

Jiffy 7c Pellets



A number of customers are trialing Jiffy 7c pellets. We have been using them for quite sometime for growing strawberries and garden vegetables. On the [shopping cart page](#) we list a number of the advantages of using these coir based pellets. We put together instructions for using them for germinating and starting strawberry seeds and include it with all orders. If you're interested in seeing these instructions send us a quick email and we'll send it to you. If you want to start strawberry seeds in a self contained medium that all but eliminates transplant shock, try these.

From the Mail Bag

We could fill several newsletters a month with questions we receive about growing gourmet strawberries. Let's look at a one here that is a very common questions we get several times a month. Perhaps you have had the same question.

A customer asked whether it was true what many online sites are saying that alpine strawberries produce continuously. Here was my answer:

..... Alpines are day neutral. They will continue to rebloom in cycles as long as conditions are favorable. Some of these conditions are soil fertility, soil pH, moisture availability, night and day temps, etc. I have found that they will rebloom even in hot conditions. Fruit set in high temps is another matter. The heat is an issue because the pollen is not active when daytime temps are in the upper 80's so fruit can be misshapen and smaller than usual. The key is to nurse them through the hottest part of the year by providing shade or cooling in the form of evaporative cooling or air conditioning if you want to keep them going. It is however, a good idea to give them a rest during hot spells. They tend to burn themselves out and a rest improves the next crop and extends the plant's life.....

Previous newsletters can be viewed at [Gourmet Berry News](#)

Coupons and Discounts

We're going to change the format here so you don't have to wade through a bunch of words to find the discount you're looking for.

First, stores where seeds are sold have a minimum \$15 order to qualify for a discount. Two exceptions, Super Fruit Seeds offers only free shipping on orders over \$25. The Strawberry Store is now offering

seeds and plants so the minimum is now \$10.

All discount codes will work from now until the end of April. Discounts for seeds are for domestic and international customers. We cannot ship plants outside the U.S. so no international discounts for plugs.

The newsletter subscription discount is available only at Strawberry Seed Store. It would cost a fortune to have this added to other sites. That discount is 5% just for subscribing. Remember, it's an opt-in system so you must click the link sent to your inbox.

So, here goes. The discount codes by store are the following:.

[The Strawberry Store](#) (old store) tssMarApr

[The Strawberry Store](#) (new store) 4WGT4AR56CF8

[Strawberry Seed Store](#) (old Store) xMarYApr

[Strawberry Seed Store](#) (new store) 4WGT4AR56CF8

[Super Fruit Seeds](#) - Free Shipping only as noted above

This code will work for the following sites 4WGT4AR56CF8

[Fraises des Bois](#)

[Alpine Strawberry Seeds](#)

[Alpine Strawberries](#)

[Strawberry Seeds](#)

[Ecwid Store](#)

[Gourmet Strawberry Seeds](#)

[Facebook](#) click the shop now button or go to "More" and products

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More Seed Saving Tips

When most people hear the words "seed saving" they immediately think about the method used to harvest the seeds. For corn, shelling the corn off the cob, for peas, opening the pods and removing the seeds and so forth. Seed saving is actually a process starting with the planning stage and ending with storing the seeds.

Here is an outline of the process we use for saving a specific cultivar.

1. Consider the genetics of the cultivar that is going to be saved. Are typical characteristics dominant or recessive. This step helps one become aware of what could go wrong in the process.
2. Plan the crop, the number of plants needed, the best timing, and other considerations. The plan must include how the cultivar is going to be isolated from plants that can cross with it. The number of plants is important not only for the goal of seed quantity desired but is important for rare varieties. There is a minimum number of plants needed to result in a diverse genetic outcome rather than in breeding.
3. A chart of the overall plan with a timeline for the target period.
4. The actual growing of the crop. This includes using every available method to prevent or

control pests. The most important part of this is disease control, especially for seed borne diseases.

5. Now, the harvest. The optimal moisture in the seed is an essential part of this. Too much moisture and the seeds won't store well, Too dry and the germination will be affected. The method of harvest is also important. The goal is to use a method that all but eliminates damage to the seeds.

6. Storage. The best storage conditions should be researched and suitable containers need to be located. Double checking seed moisture and possibly running a germination test before or during the storage period. Knowledge of how time affects germination is also essential.

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In mid January we harvested our mason bees from last summer. As you can see we had quite a haul. We didn't count them but there are well over 200. Last year was the second year of being involved with these incredible creatures.

We saved some back for use in seed production. They are stored in a refrigerator until needed.

Did You Know ?

This section is devoted to little tidbits, current trends or events, about strawberries. It may or may not appear in all future newsletters.

One of the most common questions I receive is about sowing multiple seeds per cell or container. I realize that most are trying to get as many plants as possible from seeds that seem to be expensive. Before you thin out the extra seeds consider this. I recommend sowing a "pinch" of seed to the commercial customers that I deal with. Does this sound like a waste?

It's not a waste. Multiple plants per cell or pot can require extra diligence to keep them from drying out but the positive effect is that you will have more flower stalks in the first year. The larger clump will produce more fruit. It likely won't make a lot of difference in the second year but we're all worried about the here and now.

As second thought when thinking about waste is whether to remove blooms in the first year or not. I think it's a good idea to remove blossoms from June bearing hybrids that are planted in spring. They need to establish so they can produce future crops. Same is likely true for day neutral hybrids. But, I don't think it's necessary to remove blossoms from spring planted alpines. The fruit load the first spring is limited by the size of the clump as mentioned above. Removing blossoms in my opinion just deprives you of the limited fruit. The plants grow quickly anyhow. I do remove blossoms from fall planted alpines so they can establish before harsh weather comes.

Will reconnect with you next Month. Previous newsletters can be viewed at [Gourmet Berry News](#) Visit our Stores at [Strawberry Seed Store](#) (seeds) [The Strawberry Store](#) (plugs) [Super Fruit Seeds](#) (Strawberry Packets and Super Fruit Seeds)