



## Growing Pineberries in Containers

Pineberries can be grown in any container that can hold a quart of soil. They have a small root system, so a 10"-12" pot that is 8" deep would do. Drainage is the most important consideration. Hanging containers and rain gutters can be used as long as you can provide good drainage. You should be able to check the soil moisture. Although soggy soil can kill them, they need sufficient moisture in the soil at all times.

Use a good quality soil mix intended for strawberries to fill the containers. You can also make your own with:

- 10 parts sterile potting soil
- 10 parts peat moss
- 8 parts perlite
- 4 parts compost
- 1 part sand

Combine them all to get a uniform mixture. Check the pH of the potting mix. Being woodland plants, pineberries prefer slightly acidic soil. A pH of 5.5 to 6.5 is ideal. Add suitable amendments to bring the pH within the above range.

Hanging containers can be closely planted, with 1 plant to every 6 inches. Keep them in a place that receives 6 hours of direct sunlight or 8-10 hours very bright indirect light. Water the plants before the soil dries out. Feed with a liquid fertilizer from May onwards to keep the plants in good health throughout the bearing season.

## How To Make A Pineberry Patch

If you intend to have a patch of pineberries, prepare the bed as you normally would for garden strawberries. Choose an area that gets at least 6 hours sun, preferably in the morning. Yields may be higher in areas that get sunlight for 8 hours or more, but pineberries tend to take on a pinkish tint in high-light conditions. That doesn't spoil their flavor, however.

Avoid beds where you have grown nightshade family plants such as peppers, tomatoes and potatoes before. The fungal spores of Fusarium and Verticillium that affect these plants can lay dormant in the soil for about four years and destroy your pineberry plants. Keep a safe distance from blackberry and raspberry bushes that could transfer common pathogens to your strawberries.

Bed preparation is extremely important for these perennials since they are going to be in the same spot for the next few years. Add some ammonium nitrate and a slow-release organic fertilizer to the soil while preparing the beds. Good drainage is also important. Amend the soil with plenty of organic matter and sand to improve drainage. If you have poor soil or waterlogging, consider growing them in raised beds rather than trying to amend the soil.

Pineberries need space to spread, but they don't make as many runners as garden strawberries do. You can plant them closer, one plant every 12 inches.

1. Double dig the bed and remove all weeds.
2. Add some long-lasting organic manure.
3. Make small holes in the bed 12 inches apart.
4. Place the pineberry starts in the holes, making sure that their crowns are at soil level, not below.
5. Fix them in place and tamp down the soil around them
6. Water the plants well.

The starts are ideally set out in spring after the ground has warmed up a bit, but you should shelter them from potential late spring frosts. Spring-planted strawberries may start bearing only the next year. It may even take an extra year to reach maturity.

Fall planting can be considered if you can provide sufficient winter protection. In fact, many growers recommend this as the plants get to establish a good root system before top growth starts. A good amount of mulch should be used to keep the root zone warm.

Pineberries will grow without much trouble if they are kept happy with regular watering and feeding. Give them a liquid feed of high phosphorous, high potassium fertilizer every 3-4 weeks starting from mid-spring to promote flowering and fruit set. Weed the beds as and when required. Don't allow them to smother the small plants. Check for pests and diseases and take timely actions.

When the flowers start appearing, mulch around the plants to prevent the developing fruit from touching the ground. Pick the berries as they mature; this helps increase production. Since pineberries are everbearers like Alpine strawberries, you may have a long harvest season from late spring to fall.

Cut down on water towards late fall and stop fertilizing. This will toughen up the plants for overwintering. Mulch thickly around the plants but keep them only lightly covered to avoid crown rot.

**Start Planting & Enjoy!**

