

Transplanting strawberry plants

In recent years, there have been issues with strawberry establishment, especially in seasons where temperatures are higher than usual. This is more likely to occur in the first two weeks of May. Strawberry plants are at their most vulnerable after lifting, during the transport stage and until planted. When plants are stacked into containers, whether crates or bins, and left for more than 12 hours a composting process can occur when conditions are suitable.

Composting is a process where microorganisms attach vegetative material and break it down into its component parts. The process of aerobic respiration requires oxygen, water and carbon containing material – in this case strawberry plants. During the respiration process, the microorganisms give off carbon dioxide and heat. Temperatures in bins where composting occurs, can rise to over 50°C. If strawberry plants experience these temperatures for more than 20 minutes, they will die.

Conditions that lead to composting are warm conditions and wet plants, so greatest care needs to be taken when these conditions are experienced in the runner beds. However care should also be taken to prevent plants from drying out. For these reasons the following recommendations are made:

- Keep plants out of direct sun at all times
- When you receive your plants, please ensure they are removed from their shipping container (bins, crates, sacks) as soon as you receive them
- All plants should be unpacked before planting starts
- Plants need to be removed from their container on the day received
- Never place plants in their transport containers direct into cool storage as the composting process in the middle of the containers can continue

Dipping Plants

From Ian Horner's report in the 2010 strawberry newsletter:

"Questions have been asked about phosphorous acid dips. The present recommended rate is 5ml/L (0.5%) of the 400 strength phosphorous acid materials. Differing concentration materials will need to have the rate adjusted accordingly. There are strong indications that the effect is more than a re-hydration effect, although this is an added benefit. Dipping plants in phosphorous acid is a strongly recommended practice."

Earlier work showed that there was little difference in dipping times between 30 seconds, 5 minutes, or 15 minutes. Camarosa has been damaged in the past when dipped for longer than 10 minutes.