

Potentilla x ananassa

[Synonyms : *Fragaria ananassa*, *Fragaria x ananassa*, *Fragaria chiloensis*, *Fragaria chiloensis* var. *ananassa*, *Fragaria chiloensis scouleri*, *Fragaria grandiflora*, *Fragaria x grandiflora*, *Fragaria hybrida*, *Fragaria x magna*, *Fragaria vesca* subsp. *chiloensis*]

GARDEN STRAWBERRY is a creeping perennial. It has small white flowers with orange-yellow stamens.

It is also known as *Aardbei* (Dutch), *Aedmaasikas* (Estonian), *Ananasaardbei* (Dutch), *Ananas çileği* (Turkish), *Ananaserdbeere* (German), *Ananasjordbær* (Danish), *Ananassmultron* (Swedish), *Bahçe çileği* (Turkish), *Cao mei* (Chinese), *Cây dâu tây* (Vietnamese), *Coast strawberry*, *Cultivated strawberry*, *Cultuuraardbei* (Dutch), *Da hua cao mei* (Chinese), *Dâu tây* (Vietnamese), *Eper* (Hungarian), *Erdbeer* (German), *Erdbeerstaude* (German), *Fragola* (Italian), *Fragola cultivata* (Italian), *Frangola ananasso* (Italian), *Fraise* (French), *Fraise de culture* (French), *Fraisier* (French), *Fraisier ananas* (French), *Fraisier à gros fruits* (French), *Fraisier cultivé* (French), *Fresa* (Spanish), *Fresa ananás* (Spanish), *Fresal* (Spanish), *Frutilla* (Spanish), *Frutilla ananás* (Spanish), *Gartenerdbeere* (German), *Grootbloemaardbei* (Dutch), *Grosse Erdbeer* (German), *Hage-Jordbær* (Norwegian), *Have-Jordbær* (Danish), *Ichigo* (Japanese), *Jahoda ananásová* (Slovak), *Jahoda aromatická* (Czech), *Jahodník velkoplodý* (Czech), *Jordgubbar* (Swedish), *Jordgubbe* (Swedish), *Kulturerdbeere* (German), *Květy jahodníku* (Czech), *Large fruited strawberry*, *Mansikka* (Finnish), *Morango* (Portuguese), *Morango-grande* (Brazilian, Portuguese), *Morangueiro* (Portuguese), *Morangueiro agricola* (Portuguese), *Morangueiro comum* (Portuguese), *Morangueiro cultivado* (Portuguese), *Oranda ichigo* (Japanese), *Pianta di fragola* (Italian), *Pine strawberry*, *Puutarhamansikka* (Finnish), *Quả dâu tây* (Vietnamese), *Satrobeery* (Thai), *Smultronsläktet* (Swedish), *Strawberi* (Malay), *Strawberry*, *Stroberi* (Indonesian, Malay), *Sutoroberii* (Japanese), *Tarhamansikka* (Finnish), *Zahrodna truskalca* (Czech), and *Zemlianika ananasnaia* (Russian); and in flower language is said to be a symbol of ‘be on the alert’ (blossom), esteem (fruit), foresight (blossom), innocence (blossom), love (fruit), perfect goodness (fruit), and perfection (fruit).

The garden strawberry has a similar appearance to that of the wild strawberry (*Potentilla vesca*) but is much larger. The cultivated strawberry’s taste is not considered by many to be as good as that of the wild alternative.

Ananassa is derived from the genus name *Ananas* (pineapple) with reference to past common names for this species ‘pine-strawberry’ or ‘pineapple-strawberry’.

By the 13th Century four or five different species of strawberry had been identified in Europe. The cultivation of the plant eventually began from these and produced a number of varieties that not only fruited for a longer season but also gave larger berries. Four centuries later La Quintinie (1624-1691), the highly respected Steward of the Orchards and Kitchen Gardens of Louis XIV (1638-1715), cultivated strawberries (some authorities believe it was the wild strawberry (*Fragaria vesca*) even though others were then available) in his new greenhouses at Versailles. These newfangled hot-houses enabled the King to enjoy one of his favourite fruits from May onwards. It seems that the

Sun King had a particular weakness for strawberries. He actually held a literary contest for which they were the subject. Apparently he also found it difficult to eat strawberries in moderation and when in 1709 his doctor (for reasons unspecified) instructed the King to abstain from the fruit his regal majesty still persisted to over indulge his appetite for them. His grandson, Louis XV (1710-1774), who succeeded him as King, also had a penchant for the fruit and by then a method of heating greenhouses had been discovered by the Germans. Some authorities claim the inventor was actually a French Huguenot who had escaped to Leiden in the Netherlands from religious persecution in his homeland. In any event the new invention was introduced to the Versailles greenhouses and enabled the sovereign to eat the fruit at any time of the year. Another Frenchman, whose life straddled the reigns of these two monarchs and like them had an overwhelming passion for garden strawberries, was the literary centenarian, Bernard le Bovier de Fontenelle (1657-1757). He was to attribute his long life to the enjoyment and daily intake of the small red fruit.

Some authorities claim that the first cultivated strawberry plants arrived in Britain from the Americas in the 16th Century. Others say that in that same Century native Chilean plants were brought back to France by a naval officer named Frézier, who had been born in Brittany. Between then and the 18th Century it is certain however that the European stock was augmented by new species from the United States and Chile – and some of these are still grown today around Plougastel, in France, where the traditional garden strawberry fair still takes place on the third Sunday in June. The 19th Century was not only dotted with the emergence of several of today's notable hybrids but also saw the marketing of the first cultivated modern garden strawberries.

In Britain certainly excuses for fairs were welcomed no less than on the European Continent as they provided an opportunity to meet friends and sell an abundance of local produce, particularly when shops were less accessible than now. These fairs are still held today up and down the land. Like the one at Plougastel across the Channel another that has a long history still thrives today at Wisbech and takes place towards the end of July. The dependence on garden strawberries as an excuse for a celebration is not confined to Europe either. In Canada the annual July glut of fruit around Quebec brings out women spanning the generations, dressed in costume and traditional head-dress, to sell the excess fruit around the Île d'Orléans at a reduced price.

The leaves are of no value in human medicine, although it is said that they have been fed to bilious guinea pigs and rabbits.

It is the birthday flower for 13th May.