

# MeadowSweet

## Herbs & Flowers

MeadowSweet Herbs & Flowers Monthly Newsletter

August 2018

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### [North Shore Herb Group](#)

[The North Shore Herb Group](#) meeting for August will be everything herbal that Berries can offer. Meeting is on 13 August @ 7.30pm at Albany Community Hub with a \$5 door fee. First visit free entry. Feel free to [e-mail](#) me for more information.

### It's almost Spring... or is it?

The fairy primroses are striking a pose, and the sweet violets are flowering prolifically. There's buds on my berry bushes, and the daffodils are blooming. Spring is in the air!

But these early signs of seasonal change are common in August, even though it is technically still winter, and true calendar spring is yet another month away. Warmer temperatures are also no guarantee in early spring - in some years things only start to get toasty toward late spring and early summer! So, while the eagerness is there, heed the subtle undertone of warning that it really is still cold, and that if you live in a frost zone, you shouldn't get too far ahead of yourself with planting spring and summer crops.

But don't be too late in starting off seeds of your heat loving herbs and vegetables either! If you have a little spot on a windowsill, or a sunny conservatory, or a sheltered greenhouse—there's plenty that can be sown and grown to a seedling stage for planting out later. And of course, some crops really do like germinating in the cooler temperatures anyway!

It is almost a time of anything and everything—sow **vegetables** such as artichokes & cardoon, beans, beetroot, cabbage, carrot, celeriac, celery, kohlrabi, lettuce, luffah, okra, onion, pea, radish, shallots, silverbeet, and spinach. Even capsicum, chilli, cucumber, eggplant, marrow, pumpkin, squash, sweetcorn, tomato can be started and planted out when it is much warmer. **Herbs** to sow include chervil, chives, coriander, dill, fennel, marjoram, mint, oregano, parsley, rocket, rhubarb, and thyme.

It's the best time to plant **fruits and berries** - apples, pears, plums, nectarine, quince, orange, lemon, currants, berry bushes etc. Or if you want to start from seed, some fruit like Cape gooseberry, rockmelon, strawberries and watermelon can be sown now too. **Flowers** to sow include calendula, cornflower, cosmos, marigold, sweetpea, and zinnia. It's also time to plant **tubers** like potatoes and Jerusalem artichokes (sunchokes).

[August Moon Calendar](#)

### LATEST



#### [Workshops](#) -

Contact me for details on gardening and herbal make-n-do workshops I'll run in September..

[Seeds](#) - I'm now offering seeds for sale saved from MeadowSweet's garden. All home-grown in a spray-free environment and hand-harvested. See [THIS LINK](#) for info.

[MeadowKids](#) - Starting up again in September 2018, I'll run my popular kids Gardening and Nature Club. See [here](#) for details.

[Markets](#) - Tomato plants, chillies and a few other select vegetables and herb seedlings available at Orewa Farmers Market from September.



[Social Media](#)

Connect with me!

# Herb of the Month: Strawberry

Late winter is a great time to start planting out garden strawberry runners, and even to sow strawberry seed if you want to try and cultivate them this way.

## Strawberry types



Commercial strawberries (*Fragaria × ananassa*) are known as 'garden strawberries' and have large and deliciously sweet fruit. Many cultivars exist.

Woodland strawberries (*Fragaria vesca*), and Alpine strawberries (*Fragaria alpina*) have smaller fruit than garden strawberries, but are delightfully tasty too. Often grown by herb enthusiasts.



White strawberries, including white Alpine strawberries (*F. vesca* 'White Delight'), varieties of beach berries (*F. chiloensis*) and cultivars of garden



strawberries, such as pineberries (*Fragaria × ananassa* 'Pineberry') are really interesting and pretty. Similar to red strawberries except that they don't ripen to red, apparently lacking a plant protein that gives red strawberries their colour.

There is also a common weed that looks like very much like a strawberry, but its yellow flowers and flavourless round fruit distinguish it from true strawberries. This mock strawberry is also known as Indian strawberry or snake berry (*Duchesnea indica*).

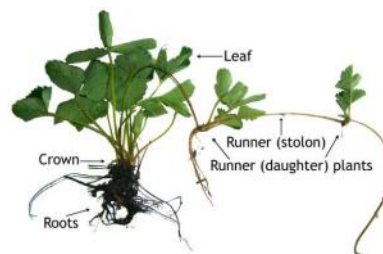


## Description

Strawberries are low-growing perennials with trifoliate leaves, white 5-petaled flowers and berry-like fruit (botanically speaking they are not true berries). They can grow in a semi-shaded or sunny position in moist soil.

## Propagating and Cultivating

Mainly propagated via runners (stolons) which are produced from the mother plant's crown. Though strawberries can be grown from seed, cultivars are all hy-



brids and resulting fruit may not come true to type.

## Uses Culinary

Strawberry fruit is soft and succulent and has an exquisite sweet flavour. They are eaten fresh, frozen, made into jams, jellies, sauces, smoothies or as a flavour for ice creams, milkshakes or in cakes and desserts. They are a very popular fruit across the globe.

Young leaves can be eaten, and flowers are edible too. Dried or fresh leaves of Alpine strawberry is brewed as a tea and the root has some historical use as a coffee substitute.

## Did You Know:

Strawberries are apparently named such after children in old England picked the berries and strung them on grass straws and sold them as "straws of berries".

## Medicinal

Strawberries have nutritional value, being high in vitamin C, manganese and folate. They are also rich in antioxidants, flavonoids and anthocyanins with impressive health associations such as boosting short-term memory, being anti-inflammatory and anti-aging.

The leaves of *F. vesca* are used as a blood tonic while strawberry fruit are soothing to sunburnt skin, and can be used for rheumatism and gout as well as being beneficial to the liver and kidneys. Even the root is used medicinally, mainly as a treatment for chilblains, but also as a throat gargle.

## Cosmetic

Strawberries are used to whiten teeth and also been used to lighten freckles. A good ingredient to add to home-made skin-care to soothe skin and smooth wrinkles.

## Garden & Household

As a companion plant, strawberries grow well

with bush beans, spinach and lettuce. Borage is a good companion to strawberries, as is Pyrethrum.

## Vegetable in focus: Miner's Lettuce



Popping up faithfully each year in winter, the garden is full of Miner's Lettuce. A wonderful (and prolific) green in the cold months, but can be grown as a leaf-crop year round in the right position.

*Claytonia perfoliata* is an annual growing to 20cm. Growing very easily, it succeeds in almost any soil and position, but prefer dappled shade. It is a very hardy plant, and not frost tender. It self-seeds prolifically when well sited.

Eat the young leaves as you would lettuce. The stalks and flowers can be eaten in a salad too. Rich in vitamin C, it makes a great spring tonic.

## Flower in focus: Sweet Violet



With the coming spring weather, the carpets of Sweet Violets are erupting with masses of gorgeous and fragrant little flowers. Sweet violets make an effective groundcover.

Of course, violets are as much a herb as an ornamental in the garden - leaves (younger are better) and flowers are edible, and can be added to salads, or made into a tea. It has a history of folk use as a herbal remedy for various ailments, and the essential oil is used in perfumery.

## Kids Corner



Getting kids back in tune with our natural world is important to their development, and our environment.

While all the garden world is getting excited about sowing seeds—involve the kids by letting them sow fast-growing cress-heads!

**Challenge:** Decorate a paper cup with eyes and a mouth and fill with soil (remember to poke a hole in the bottom for drainage). Sow a layer of cress (or other fast-growing microgreen) on the top. The sprouting plants will look like hair on the head. Kids can then give these cress heads a haircut and eat the nutritious sprouts.

Why not show me your amazing creations by [e-mailing me](#).

## Recipe Share

### Strawberry Cream Cheese Bread

[Genius Kitchen](#)

#### INGREDIENTS

- 1/2 cup butter, softened
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 tub cream cheese, softened
- 2 eggs

- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 2 cups flour
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 cup milk (half 'n half)
- 1 1/2 cups strawberries, chopped
- 1/2 cup finely chopped pecans (optional)

#### DIRECTIONS

With electric mixer cream butter, sugar and cream cheese until fluffy. Add eggs one at a time. Mix in vanilla.

In separate bowl, mix flour, baking powder, baking soda and salt. Blend flour mixture with butter mixture just until blended. Add milk and only stir just to blend -- do not over stir!

Drain strawberries and blot dry. Carefully just fold in strawberries and nuts. Dough mixture will be thick.

Grease and flour a 9x5 inch loaf pan. Bake in a 350 degree oven for 50 to 60 minutes. Let bread mellow for one day and then serve.



### Strawberry Thyme Butter

Blend half a cup strawberries with 1/2 teaspoon fresh thyme in a blender, add 1/2 cup butter and whizz together until smooth. Serve on scones.

*\*This newsletter is for informational purposes only. Please see my [disclaimer](#).*