

Strawberry PVC Tower

PVC Pipe 6" dia. (usually sold in 10' lengths so it will give your two 5' towers) Be sure to use new pipe not used sewer pipe.

1 1/2" hole saw

There will be eight rows of hole around the circumference of the pipe spaced equally The lines should end up 2 1/2" center to center (What I did was stand the tube upright and pick a mark and plumb bob and mark the bottom then mark off my 8 rows of equal distance. If you try to do it by eye the rows may go on a slant and increase as you go along.)

Then mark off 4" down each row Holes should start 8" from the bottom as this will keep your plants off the ground. By following these measurements and spacing you should end up with 4 rows of 12 holes and 4 rows of 13 holes, for a total of 100 holes per 5-foot tube. That's 100 strawberry plants per tower.

Drill out the holes in the pipe. Use a file or sandpaper to take the sharp edges off the holes. Strawberry runners are delicate and can break off if it rubs against a sharp edge especially in the wind.

Now comes the part of keeping it up and watering. i changed the original plans as the method I received did not work very well. As you see in the photo they said to use wire. In my area we sometimes get strong winds. The plans called for a end cap which I deleted and used a 6" to 4" reducer. I glued the reducer to the pipe but left the 4" end free as we have hurricanes and if I need to move them I could just lift them off. You could also use a threaded 4" and use galvanized pipe as well. I cut the 4" PVC into 2' sections and buried them in ground with about 1" above ground so the lawn guy don't break them off. To be sure if they are off I stick a landscape flag in them to show they are there. Now you have towers that will not tip over and you don't need the wire leaving that room for something else which I will explain.



When it comes to irrigation, I cannot recommend drip irrigation enough.



Being in Florida one of my biggest peeves was watering my container garden. Being from New York where we have soil I could grow anything as I had lived on a farm. Florida introduced me to "How to grow a garden in Hell." One minute its hot and humid next minute it's a downpour. My biggest problem was watering as If you forgot or missed a day things had a chance to die. So after careful thought I chose drip irrigation and placed it on a watering timer. I us a 4 zone as I have herb garden as well as container garden. If just the towers you can use a single fitting which are cheaper.



You can bypass the timer if you feel you can do without but they are not expensive, run by battery and can set them by time and go between your outside spigot and hose to the drip irrigation. You can buy a drip irrigation kit but I would use the drip fittings on the towers as you can run the tubes over the top or as I did by putting a tube down the full length of the pipe with a dripper every foot (Five drippers) this way all your plants get water. Remember drip irrigation is a slow drip so make sure the bottom soil is well moist.

Another problem I ran into with the original plans was that sometimes we got torrential downpours and soil would be forced out the holes in the pipe and even to the point of washing out the plants. So I placed fiberglass screening in my tube just to cover the inside circumference of the tube. When planting I cut a small slit with knife in screening so plant could be pushed through into soil. Wha-la problem solved. In a hard down pour the pipe does collect water but with the adapter to allow drainage into ground this stopped that problem as well as the cap allowed the pipe to collect water more easily.

Soil

If you are going hydroponically use a horticulture Perlite and be sure to add the nutrients with the watering. If soil based use a loose potting soil with Perlite. When using a fertilizer it is best to use a slow release type fertilizer. Mix it well with you soil mix. I like to use organic based fertilizers. I also ass a substance to my soil mix which is Miracle Grow Water storing Crystals. What happens when they get wet they swell up and hold water and slowly release it over time. Don't add a whole lot as they hold many times their size and will be like my daughter cooking rice except these things hold about ten times their size in water. It's just a added bonus for keeping you plants well watered. Be sure to make sure your soil is pre-moist before putting in tube.



Planting

Be sure to have your strawberry root stock. There are two methods but because of the screening I prefer the latter. If you don't use screening pour your soil mix up to first set of holes and place in the plants and proceed pour soil to next holes and so on. With the screening method I fill the tubes with soil and then slit screen covered holes and I push my finger into the hole with plant root and set the root into the soil. Be sure to set the root crowns into proper depth as if regular planting.

