

## Caitlin Dark - Picking Strawberries

Hello!! Welcome to my little botanical sanctuary that normal people call their back garden, but I call the greatest place on earth. Here I have a wide variety of plants, herbs, flowers, vegetables, and down the back corner there I have more herbs, but we don't talk about those herbs. It is currently summer, and so as many of you may know, it is strawberry season, and I just so happen to have a strawberry patch that is around the size of a football field, give or take a few feet. The first step to picking these delicious red berries is to gather a bucket. Any size bucket will work but depending on the size of your plants you may want to use a larger or smaller bucket. Today I am using this old bathtub I found at a garage sale that had a few cracks in it and a family of cockroaches living in the drain. I think it will be perfect! But you can use anything. Some of my personal favourite alternatives are, your uncles old smelly gym shoe, a comically large dog food bowl, or a plastic bucket with at least a third of it ripped off from overuse, so every single strawberry falls out leaving you with nothing. Great!! Now that we have our weapon of choice, it's time to head over to the field. One thing to look out for while picking strawberries, or any plant that is, are bugs. Personally, I am a huge fan of bugs, but a lot of people aren't. Some common creepy crawlies you may find while on your berry picking adventures are, bees, wasps, and ants. The ants aren't any worry though, however their stinging flying friends are a bit of an inconvenience. In my time I'm lucky to have only been stung 347 times. I'm numb to their venom at this point. But beginner gardeners won't be, so I recommend protective clothing and headgear. I'm not talking about one of those big space suits looking things that beekeepers use. I mean a large hoodie that covers your entire face, gloves, and thick woolly trousers, accompanied by the biggest combat boots you own. This outfit will prevent any bugs; however, it won't prevent the very likely circumstance of heat stroke. Okay! We are all ready to pick. There is a very certain technique when it comes to picking these berries. You grab the red berry by its torso; violently rip its stem off its body leaving it decapitated and writhing in pain; and throw it into the bucket to slowly die and rot away in a pool of its fallen brethren. Great fun!! Repeat this process until you run out of strawberries, or until your bucket is filled. Whichever comes first. Once you've filled your bucket, your arms are covered in approximately 13 bug bites of various sizes and pain levels, and your sweat from the sharp summer sun rays has run down your face and into your eyes, causing them to water, once again adding to the sticky amounts of moisture on your body, then you've done something right!!! Congratulations!! Now you get to sit down and enjoy your bathtub full of homegrown fresh strawberries. That is, if your bucket stayed intact.