



College of Food, Agricultural, and
Environmental Sciences
Ohio State University Extension

For immediate release

News and
Media
Relations

216 Kottman
Hall
2021 Coffey
Road
Columbus, Ohio
43210-1044

Strawberry Crown Reduction May Increase Berry Size

By Candace Pollock

(330) 202-3550

pollock.58@osu.edu

Source: Steve Polter

(614) 292-2001

polter.1@osu.edu

COLUMBUS, Ohio – Crown reduction of plasticulture strawberries may increase berry size, cutting back on production costs for growers seeking to maintain their crop for several years.

Steve Polter, an Ohio State University horticulture and crop science research assistant, plans to prune the crowns of second-year harvest plasticulture strawberries in the hopes that the thinning will encourage growth of the remaining crowns, thereby increasing fruit size.

Plasticulture strawberry production involves growing strawberries on raised soil beds covered in black plastic. The plastic keeps the soil warm and suppresses weed growth, allowing growers to harvest strawberries earlier in the season. Since plasticulture strawberries are confined to a small area, however, one root system dominates the plant and by the second year of production, the root system cannot support the number of fruit that are produced.

“We found we weren’t getting enough fruit in the first year of harvest to justify annual production, and since the cost of producing strawberries is so high, we were trying to come up with ways to get more out of the plant,” said Polter. “If we can increase berry size, it would make the fruit more marketable and would justify maintaining the crop over at least a three-year period.” Polter said most growers try to get at least three harvests out of one berry crop, since the production costs are much cheaper than planting a new crop each year.

Polter will reduce strawberry plants from 5 crowns to one, two, or three and compare the plants to those with full crowns over the next year. Polter believes that crown reduction will not only increase water and nutrient flow, but will make harvesting much easier since there will be less leaf mass to work with. Polter will conduct the

project on 4.5 acres of plasticulture strawberries on a commercial farm in Fremont, Ohio,
beginning in July.