



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

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News and
Media
Relations

Strawberry Season At Last

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PIKETON, Ohio -- How many of us have been waiting for Ohio strawberries to be ripe for the picking? There is nothing better than sweet, juicy Ohio strawberries on a hot summer day whether it's fresh from the field, over ice cream or on shortcake. Summer just doesn't get any better than that. According to the 1997 Ohio Census of Agriculture, strawberries are grown on over 800 acres in Ohio. This 800 acres represents 375 farms throughout the state. Many of these are small to medium size farms that have added a pick your own strawberry business to diversify their operation or to help supplement their income.

Most strawberries in Ohio are grown on a matted row system. The matted row system has strawberry plants growing close to each other so that it looks "matted" with plants completely covering the soil in a row. For matted row strawberries it takes a year for fruit production and requires around 5,500 plants per acre. There are two major types of strawberry plants, June-bearing or day-neutral. June-bearing plants are cultured to produce a full crop the season after planting. In Ohio, the ripening season of June-bearing strawberry cultivars ranges from late May to the end of June. Day-neutral type strawberry plants produce a full crop the first season they are planted. Most strawberries grown in Ohio are June-bearing varieties. Matted row strawberry plantings will usually last at least three years and sometimes many more with proper care and management.

Some Ohio producers are practicing plasticulture strawberry production, which is growing strawberries on plastic. Plasticulture strawberries are planted in early fall on a raised bed of soil covered with black plastic. The plastic keeps the soil warm and suppresses weed growth. On average, 17,500 plants per acre are planted in the fall and harvested the following spring. Plasticulture production is generally an annual system therefore, after harvest the planting is removed and the process repeated. Varieties that have proven to adapt well to annual plasticulture production are Chandler, Camarosa and Sweet Charlie. These varieties, grown in Ohio to full maturation, are some of the sweetest berries you've ever tasted. Typically strawberries grown on plastic ripen around two weeks earlier than the matted row strawberries. According to Bill Fulton, Fulton Farms, Troy,

Ohio, "their plasticulture strawberries will be ready around May 20 with the matted row strawberries to be ready around June 1." Fulton's currently grow five acres of strawberries on plastic and 20 acres using the matted row system.

Fulton Farms has seen many changes in its 40 years of growing strawberries. Fulton remembers when the pick your own business saw a drastic decrease in the 80's. A large reason for this was the increase in two income households. No longer did the spouse have the time to go pick fresh fruits and vegetables. Instead they would buy it pre-picked from their local markets on the way home from work. "Fulton estimates that they sell approximately 50-60% of their berries pick your own." It often becomes an annual family activity to visit a local farm and pick berries.

Not only is Troy, Ohio the home for Fulton Farms, but it also celebrates the strawberry every June by hosting the Troy Strawberry Festival. This year's festival is June 2-3. The festival pulls in over 200,000 people to enjoy the activities. According to festival coordinators, "There are hundreds of arts and crafts booths and many taste tempting food booths with many unique strawberry delights." For more information on the Troy Strawberry Festival visit the web site at <http://www.tdn-net.com/strawberryfest> or call the Miami County Visitors and Convention Bureau at 1-800-348-8993.

Strawberries often become a staple of most diets during the 4-6 weeks they are available in Ohio. Strawberries are packed with nutrition. An average size serving of strawberries (approximately eight medium berries or 147 grams) will provide an individual with more vitamin C than one medium size orange. A serving of strawberries can also provide you with 16 percent of your recommended daily allowance of fiber. Wow, a low calorie (45 calories/serving), no cholesterol food that tastes great - that's strawberries.

More information on growing strawberries or their nutritional benefits can be found at the Ohio State University Extension web site at <http://ohioline.osu.edu> or by contacting your local OSU Extension Office.