

Strawberries May be Planted In May If Stored Properly

Strawberry growers who use cold-stored plants may be able to reduce first-year production costs by delaying the planting date two to three months, the U.S. Department of Agriculture reports.

In tests at Beltsville, Md., less labor was required for weed control and removal of excess runner plants in plots set in June than in plots set April or May. The research workers found no significant differences in yield, fruit size, and amount of fruit decay, or crown size of strawberries planted in April, May, or June. Growers normally plant no later than April.

June planting is made by a handling and storing method in which dormant plants are dug in winter months, bundled in crates lined with polyethylene, and stored at 30° F. This method was developed in previous USDA research by horticulturist John T. Worthington, of the Agricultural Marketing Service, and Dr. Donald H. Scott, horticulturist of the Agricultural Research Service.

Lancaster Farming, Saturday, January 12, 1963—13

Strawberry plants handled this way retain their bright green foliage and vigorous roots for as long as 10 months in cold storage. Cold-stored plants are available from many east coast nurserymen.

Before a method was developed for storing plants in good condition over a period of many months, setting in March or April was recommended. Most east coast strawberry growers still plant this early, even if they use cold-stored, polyethylene-packaged plants.

In the date-of-setting tests, Mr. Worthington and Dr. Scott used plants of four varieties — Surecrop, Pocahontas, Sparkle, and Blakemore. Matted strawberry beds were kept to a uniform width of two feet by periodic removal of excess runners. On the plots set in April, excess runners were removed four times between August and October. On the May-set plots, runners were clipped three times between September and October. On the June-set plots, a few runners were removed once, in October. By the end of the growing season, plant density was the same on all plots, regardless of when they were planted.

Irrigation was necessary to give the June-set plants a good start. But the need for irrigation is not necessarily limited to June planting. In many cases, the researchers point out, irrigation is desirable throughout the growing season, regardless of the planting time.



CHAMPION SHORTHORN OF THE 4-H steer competition at the Pennsylvania Farm Show on Thursday was shown by Donna Hess, the 11-year-old daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Elvin Hess, Jr., Strasburg R1. Donna duplicated the feat she accomplished at the Pennsylvania Livestock Exposition in November.

L. F. Photo.

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