

Strawberries add delight to any garden

NEWARK, Del. — There may be snow in the furrows of your backyard garden, but it's not too early to make plans for raising some of everybody's favorite fruit — strawberries.

This popular small fruit is easy to grow, says University of Delaware Extension garden specialist Dave Tatnall. Strawberries take up little space, thrive with ordinary care, have few serious pest problems, and can produce amazingly big crops — at least a pint from each original plant. They can be eaten right out of the garden, freeze well, and make delicious jam.

You can plant strawberries as soon as the ground is easily worked in early Spring. Late March through mid-April is the best time.

The best source of strawberry plants is a mail

order nursery that specializes in strawberries and other fruit, says Tatnall.

The plants are usually sold in bundles of 25 or multiples of 25. Fifty or 75 plants are usually adequate for the average family. Buy only stock certified "virus-free," cautions the specialist, and order early in order to make sure your plants arrive at the right time.

Select a sunny, well-drained location for your berry patch. It could be part of your vegetable garden. Prepare the soil as you would for any garden — spade or rototill and level the surface. When working the ground, mix in some fresh mushroom soil, compost or similar organic matter.

Then spread about three pounds (six cups) of a 5-10-10 or 5-10-5 fertilizer every 100 square feet and thoroughly rake this in.

Set the plants in rows four feet apart, with 18-24 inches between plants in the row. Make holes big enough so that the roots are not crowded. And be sure the crowns (bases) of the plants are level with the soil surface. Press the soil firmly around each plant, then give it a pint of water or liquid fertilizer.

Don't get too excited over dreams of lush berries from

your garden this Summer, though, cautions Tatnall. You should remove all the flowers this first year (except for everbearers), he explains. This encourages more vigorous plant growth, and will result in greater yield next year. Allow all runners to develop until early Fall. Keep rows about 24 inches wide, with a 24-inch clearance between them. Hoe or hand weed your strawberry plants frequently and thoroughly.

Suggested varieties include early-bearing "Earliglow," "Midland" "Fairfax," and "Redglow;" mid-season "Pocahontas," "Surecrop," "Midway," and "Redchief;" and late-bearing "Sparkle," "Delite," "Marlate" and "Redstar."

If you want a crop of berries you can harvest the first year, consider an everbearing variety such as "Ozark Beauty," or "Ourown." Or plan an outing to one of the many pick-your-own strawberry operations. Most of these are advertized in local papers as the harvest season approaches.

With proper care, next Summer your berry patch will be bursting with succulent red strawberries for your eating pleasure.

Finnsheep crosses increase crop

NEWARK, Del. — Research in the North Central states shows market lamb producers can increase profits by using breeds and systems that maximize gains from breed superiority and hybrid vigor of crossbred ewes and lambs, according to Delaware Extension livestock specialist Dr. Richard Fowler. The key to profits is found in the Finnish Landrace breed of sheep, he says. These are small, white-faced sheep that are below acceptable standards for growth rate, fleece weight, and carcass quality. However, they are very prolific and produce lamb crops of 250 to 450 per cent. The breed has a shorter gestation period than others, and will breed almost any time of the year. What's more, these sheep transmit the trait of higher fertility to their crossbred offspring.

Fowler advises use of one-half Finnsheep crosses with such breeds as Dorset, Suffolk, Targhee or Rambouillet. Commercial ewes mated with meat breed sires can reduce ewe costs per pound of market lamb by 20 to 25 per cent compared with one-half Rambouillet and domestic U.S. breed crossbred ewes. The one-half Finn-cross ewes have earlier sexual maturity and larger numbers of lambs per parturition. Lambs weigh five to six pounds less at 10 weeks weaning because there are more twins. Post weaning daily gain and carcass yield

and grade are slightly lower at the same slaughter weight compared to Rambouillet-cross ewes.

Producers should consider one-fourth or one-half Finn-cross ewes in order to increase lambs born per 100 ewes by 20 or 50 lambs respectively. The one-half Finn-cross has the advantage under intensive management conditions. Producers should be ready to provide supplemental milk to lambs under these conditions. Harsh management conditions favor the one-fourth Finn ewe, since she may raise as many lambs as the one-half ewe raises and she has a longer productive life.

Suffolk, Hampshire, and Oxford sire breeds differ lit-

tle in total pounds of lamb marketed at 22 or 31 weeks of age per 100 lambs born when lamb mortality is 10 to 20 per cent, says Fowler. However, Suffolks excel when mortality is below this, while Oxfords offer top performance when mortality is above 20 per cent. Hampshire crosses are intermediate in both respect-

Some commercial and purebred breeders may be experiencing 150 to 180 per cent lamb crops, but most producers are far behind this level of performance. For these producers, the specialist says, a one-half Finn-cross ram mated to commercial ewes may be the answer.

Reader's Corner

"Prayer on the Q.T."

Now I sit me down in school
Where praying is against the rule.
For this great nation under God
Finds public mention of Him odd.

Any prayer a class recites
Now violates the Bill of Rights.
Any time my head I bow
Becomes a Federal matter now.

Teach us of stars or pole and equator
But make no mention of their Creator.
Tell of exports to Denmark or Sweden
But not one word of what Eve did in Eden.

The law is specific; the law is precise;
Praying out loud is no longer nice.
Praying aloud in a public hall
Upsets believers in no time at all.

In silence alone can we meditate
And if God should get the credit, great.
This rule, however, has a gimmick in it,
You've got to be finished in less than a minute.

So all I ask is a minute of quiet
If I feel like praying, then maybe I'll try it.
If not, O Lord, this plea I make
Should I die in school, my soul You'll take.

From the Teen Challenge
Training Center, Rehrersburg, Pa.

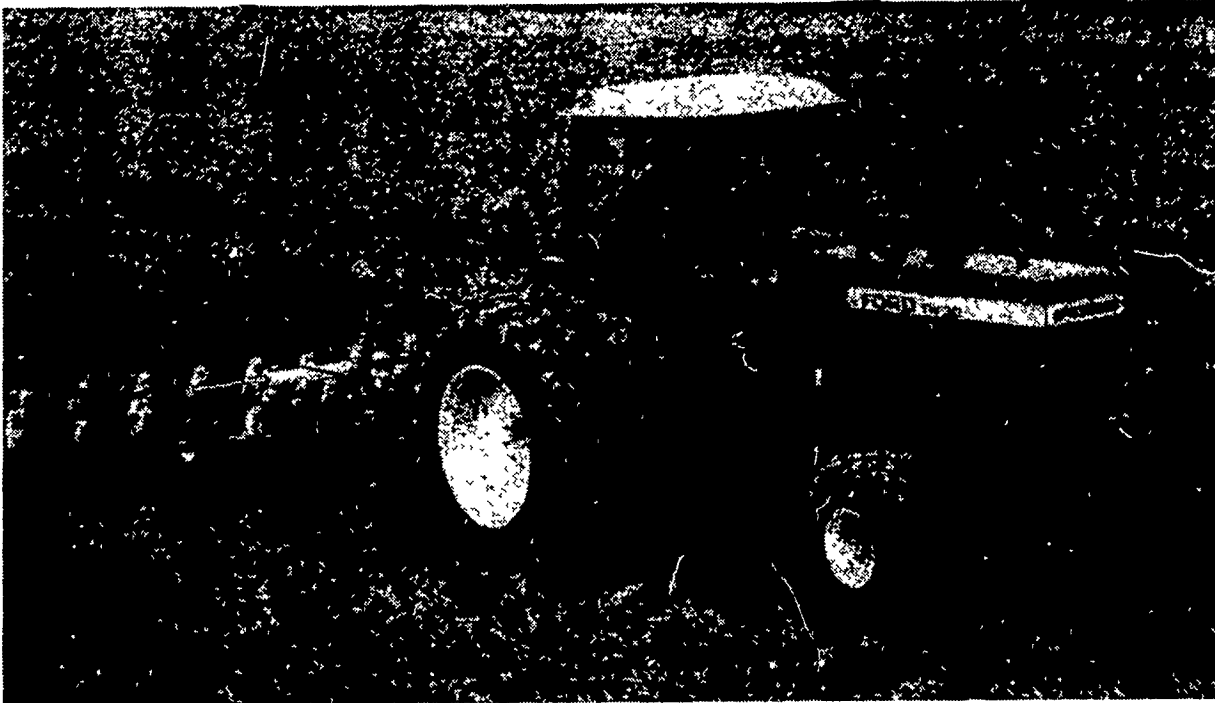
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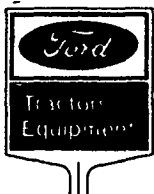
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