

Delta fruit growers

(Continued from Page C36) damages low-lying spots. Nevertheless, weather remains the biggest problem, according to Mel Fifer.

"In 1979, we lost a third of our strawberry crop to the heavy rains," he recalls. "There were times when we had customers out picking in the rain, but we still lost a great many."

While strawberries are the farm's main crop, there's something for customers

throughout the Summer and Fall months. After the last red berry disappears, peas will take center stage. This year's pickers can select from regular garden varieties as well as edible-podded snow peas and Sugar Snaps.

July ushers in the main vegetable season, with favorites like sweet corn, tomatoes, beans, summer squash and cucumbers. Hot-weather growers, like peppers and eggplants, will



Fruit growers Margie Fifer and Marley Boyd, from left, welcomed state promotion director Connie Harness and Deputy Secretary of

Agriculture Chester Heim during a recent pre-tour press visit.

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peak a few weeks later, while pumpkins, gourds and Indian corn stretch the season into October.

Several areas of expansion are on the back burner, especially in the fruit production department.

"Right over there I'd like to put in a 'bramble patch,'" says Mel Fifer, nodding his head toward the luxuriant grass waving across a field road from the white-blossoming strawberry rows.

A "bramble patch" would include plantings of raspberries and blackberries, a step toward Fifer's eventual goal of specializing in small fruits. Customers show great interest in those crops; and the potential for marketing is almost unlimited, with commercial blackberry plantings rare in this area. First choice of a blackberry type would be a new development labeled, "Heritage." It's a full-bearer, ripening in Sep-

tember and October, and is mowed down yearly, setting fruit on vigorous new canes that grow over the Summer.

Another possible fruit project is "trellised fruit," small fruit trees trained to grow fence-style for sun exposure and ease in harvest. Pear trees, or "something unusual" would be the Fifer's choice for that unique part of the farm.

Pick-your-own at Sleepy Hollow is designed to be a family fun event and the

Fifer's place no restrictions on children in the picking areas. Their own three youngsters, Lisa, 16, Mark, 14, and ten-year-old Sean are an important part of the family planting, harvest and sales staff. They'll be on hand on June 21 to welcome the Delta tour visitors and show them around the variety of plantings. Also of interest to the guests will be the operation of a mulching machine used in various (Turn to Page C38)

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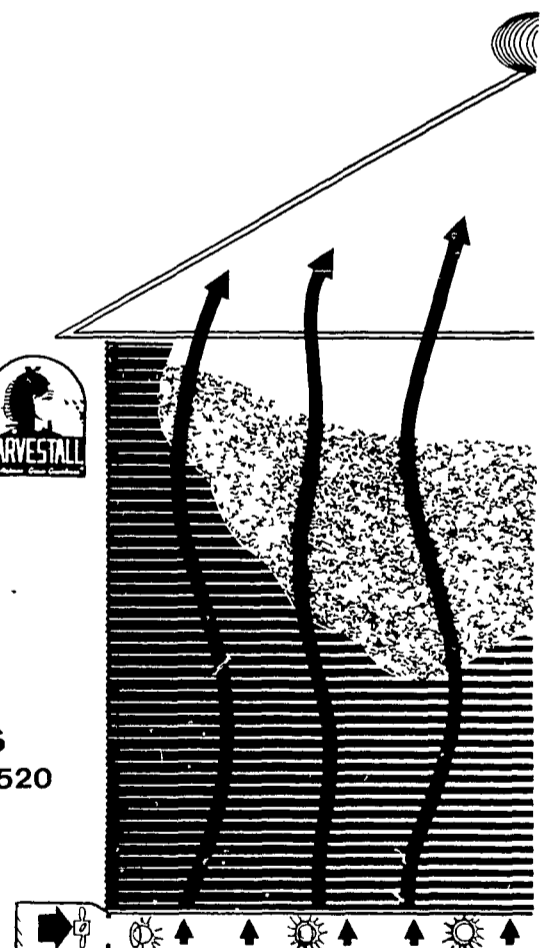
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