

U-Pick harvest

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acreage in this highly popular U-pick crop. The new "patch" will begin producing next spring. They've also added a peach orchard and blueberry bushes. These will both bear lightly this summer.

Memorial Day was a busy day for strawberry sales. Altogether this Memorial Day they sold about 1100 quarts, says Donna. Customers paid 45 cents a quart for the berries, which have been selling for between \$1 and \$1.95 in the stores.

University of Delaware extension vegetable specialist Mike Orzolek, who helps farmers like Bill O'Day solve production problems, estimates that you can get about 5,000 quarts an acre from a planting of strawberries over the three-week period

plants are bearing. By growing several varieties that mature at different times, O'Day can extend the harvest another week or so—provided a spell of hot weather doesn't speed ripening of fruit on all plants.

Strawberry plants are good for about three seasons before disease and weed problems render them unproductive. Then you must relocate the bed and replant using healthy new stock. O'Day figures he's spent about \$2,000 so far, not counting labor, just to set out his new six and a half acre patch. So the crop's not all profit by any means. It took a lot of time to remove blooms, too, so that the young plants wouldn't set fruit their first season.

Because supply and variety of crops available

can change overnight, Donna O'Day strongly urges all prospective pickers to call before making the trip out to the farm. The drive from Seaford or Laurel isn't much, but some of their clients come from as far away as Ocean View or Salisbury. A few weeks ago a man drove over from Baltimore with his 80-year-old mother. Between them they picked 25 quarts of strawberries.

Donna, who handles the customer contacts and sales, says quite a few other senior citizens come to pick, too. But there's no "typical" age group or customer. Last spring, somebody rode out from town on a bicycle and picked berries into a brown paper bag. People have even picked into flower pots and a diaper bag. The other day they got their first Moped customer.

The new peach orchard should start producing lightly this year, but Bill and Donna haven't decided yet whether this will be a U-pick or pre-picked crop. At any rate, once the trees start to bear, there'll be four varieties to choose from — a white, Belle Georgia, and three yellow types, Loring, Redskin and Red Haven.

Altogether this summer, they have 25 acres in fruits and vegetables, plus an additional 40 in sweet corn. This crop is sold either U-pick or pulled, depending on

demand. In the past, some operators of roadside stands have come to pick large quantities of corn for resale to their own customers.

Though they're out in the country, they feel they're in an ideal location for business, close as they are to towns like Seaford, Laurel and Federalsburg. They're open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday through Saturday. On Saturdays they open at 1 and close at 5, so the family has a chance to go to church in the morning and relax a bit in the evening.

O'Day has two full-time employees who help him with his corn and soybeans. He also hires a couple of workers to hoe weeds in the U-pick crops during the growing season. But otherwise they do much of the work themselves. Their two children, Billy (9) and Becky (7), help out where they can—showing customers where to pick, and doing some of the weeding. Bill's mother, Mrs. Mildred O'Day, also lends a welcome hand. So it's very much a family business.

The O'Days keep things fairly simple for themselves and their clients. You're expected to provide your own containers—which accounts for some of the unconventional items used on occasion to gather strawberries. They show you how to pick, and how to tell when a fruit or vegetable is

mature. Otherwise, they pretty much leave people to themselves. Contrary to some pick-your-own operators, they don't tell you which section of the field you can pick in. Their sign does say no pets or children under 12 are permitted in the fields. But if someone brings young children, they can wait near the sales stand while their parents pick. On the whole, the system seems to work very well.

The only problem, admits Donna, is that they're tied rather closely to the farm during the growing season. But this doesn't seem to

bother her much. There's even a certain notoriety attached to the business. When she goes shopping in Seaford these days, people are likely to stop her in the supermarket to exclaim, "Oh, you're the U-pick lady!"

Bill O'Day used to grow a lot of vegetables on contract from some of the processors on the peninsula. But then he decided he'd rather grow his own for fresh market sale. U-pick seemed a logical alternative, from a labor standpoint. And so far he hasn't been disappointed.

USDA seeks farm women suggestions

LITITZ - USDA will soon know a good deal more about the role of women on the nation's farms and their experiences with farm services and programs.

About 4,100 farm women will be contacted in a nationwide survey this summer as part of an inquiry into the status of women in relation to USDA programs, program management procedures, and job opportunities.

The survey will be conducted for USDA by the National Research Center of Chicago, a nonprofit social research institute.

Information from the survey will provide USDA's recently established Farm Women's Project with a record of farm women's experiences with USDA services and their perceptions of the Department.

The Farm Women's Project will also report on farm women's legal rights to USDA program benefits and funds.

Farm women with suggestions on the survey can write to Carol Forbes, Farm Women's Project, Room 1548 South Bldg., USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250, or phone 202/447-2582.

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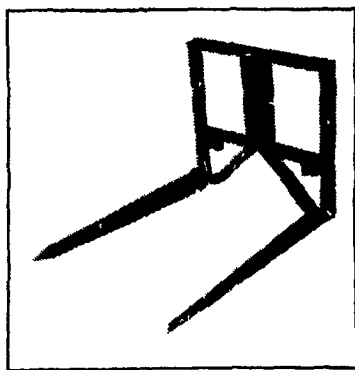
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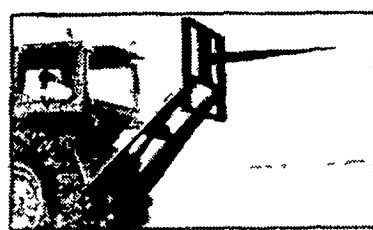
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3-POINT BASE WITH FORKS

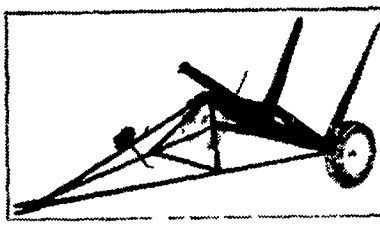
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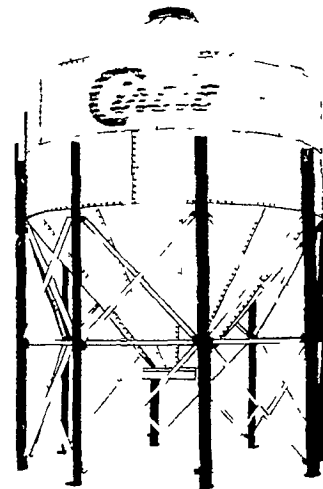


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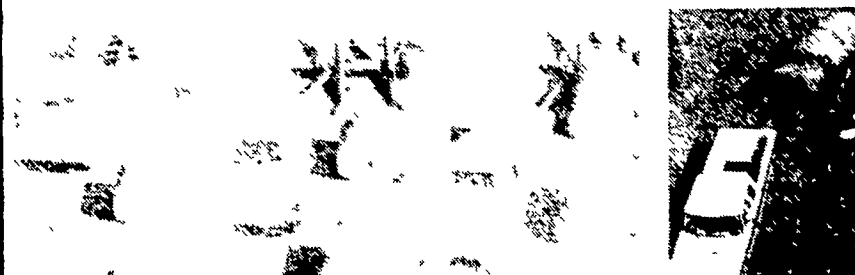


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