

Growers probe economics of strawberry production

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BIGLERVILLE — No fruit crop requires more intensive labor per acre than strawberries, reported Marshall Ritter, Penn State pomologist and research specialist.

"Research calculates the costs (of strawberry production) to be from \$1,200 to \$2,000 per acre," he noted. "But, with runner placement, clipping the blossoms on young plants, water, and enough sunny days, you can expect to get 12,000 to 18,000 quarts per acre."

The yield and the price per quart are the ends that justify the means of producing the scrumptious shortcake-toppers. With prices ranging from 60 cents to 70 cents a quart for the pick-your-own berries, to \$1.25 to \$1.50 a quart for retail sales, producers reap the fruits of their labor in a rewarding way.

Analyzing the cold, cash facts on strawberry production, Ritter shared his views with growers from Franklin, York and Adams counties during the recent

grower's meeting held here at Sandhoe's Fruit Farm.

While touring the Sandhoe strawberry patches, Ritter made several observations on planting and production of the berry crop. While growers questioned the economics of paid labor for runner placement and nipping the blossoms of young plants, Ritter stated, "The labor spent with young berries, pulling blossoms and setting runners, pays for itself in increased production."

Ritter pointed out that the first plant runner has 60% the production of the mother plant and the second runner has only 15% the production potential. He recommended placing the runners six to eight inches from the mother plant in such a fashion as to form the spokes of a wheel. He also suggested fertilizing new patches 10-14 days after planting with 20 pounds of actual nitrogen per acre.

Ritter strongly stressed the need for growers to spend more time determining the types of grasses and weeds emerging in their patches and their soil pH before applying herbicides since proper



Acres of blossoming strawberries awaited inspection by growers from York, Franklin, and Adams counties at a recent growers meeting held at the Ralph Sandhoe Fruit Farm, Biglerville, Adams County. Some of the rows were damaged by what was determined to be a combination of herbicides and cold weather.



Ritter and Ralph Sandhoe, owner and operator of Sandhoe Fruit Farm, examined a two-year-old patch. Soil acidity, cold and herbicide damage were suggested as possible causes of plant loss in this patch.

identification and analysis are crucial to proper herbicide selection. He stated that the herbicide should be incorporated into the soil about one-half inch deep by either irrigation or mechanical means.

When questioned on variety preference, Ritter stated, "At the present time, I would recommend the Red Chief. It has fewer white heads and larger secondary berries." Stressing that a good flowering stock will have 15 to 20 berry buds, he pointed out that Red Chief produces 14 to 16 flowering buds per flower stock.

Several growers questioned possible burn damage to their younger plants due to the application of the herbicide Sinbar. Ritter cautioned the growers to sample their soils for acidity, levels before selecting their herbicide to avoid possible burning. When applying Sinbar, Ritter stressed application of the single herbicide and not to mix it with Devrinol.

Ritter, in response to questions on patch renovations, likened the process to "ending up by starting all over again." When renovating

the patch, he outlined first checking for weeds and then spraying the rows with 2, 4-D, Formula 40. Ten to fourteen days later the patch should be moved to a height of two inches above the tops of the crowns with a rotary or clipper mower.

Then, according to Ritter, follow with a soil test, apply nitrogen, and cultivate between the rows. Then take a spring-tooth harrow right over the tops of the rows, taking out 85-90 percent of the plants. Then use Devrinol or Sinbar. Finally, Ritter recommended applying mulch — one half in the

last week in July and the other half after the first good frost.

To obtain maximum berry production, Ritter concluded, "In strawberry production some of the best things you can do are done two years ahead of your crop."

"Start with getting some good organic matter worked into your fields ... There is an increased labor cost in setting the runners, nipping the blossoms from new plants, and the proper use of herbicides, but consider the return on a couple of thousand extra quarts per acre. What you put into your berries is what you'll get out of them."

NAILE announces

Q.H. stakes deadlines

LOUISVILLE, Ky — Deadlines for major competition brackets at North American International Livestock Exposition Quarter Horse Stakes were announced by Harold Workman, NAILE General Manager. When making the announcement, Workman noted that Quarter Horse owners can save money by planning early, since the nomination fee for the classes is arranged on an escalating basis according to date.

The Stakes Events are as follows: Barrel Race Maturity (foals of 1979) - \$500 added; Barrel Race Sweepstakes (any age) - \$1,000 added; Reining Horse Futurity (foals of 1979) - \$1,000 added; Amateur Reining Horse Futurity (foals of 1979) - \$500 added; Amateur Western Pleasure Classic (any age) - \$500 added; Western Pleasure Futurity (foals of 1980) - \$1000 added, Western Pleasure Maturity (foals of 1979) - \$500 added; Bridle Path Hack (Hunt Seat) Classic (foals of 1979 & 1980) - \$500 added; Dally Team Roping Classic (any age) - \$500 added; and Calf Roping Classic (any age) - \$100 added.

Nominating fees and deadlines for all categories are as follows: \$100 - if nominated before August 1; \$150 - if nominated after August

1, until September 1; \$200 - if nominated after September 1, until October 31, and \$400 - if nominated after October 31, until November 12.

Officials of the NAILE Quarter Horse Show expect entries to be up in 1982. The show ranks 16th nationally and is rated as a National Class A event. All Quarter Horse events will again be held at the Kentucky Fair and Exposition Center.

Nominating fees for the Stakes Events should be mailed to the North American International Livestock Exposition, P.O. Box 36367, Louisville, KY 40233. Workman said that detailed conditions pertaining to Stakes participants will be mailed when nominating fees are received. Special requests for information will also be honored.

The North American International Livestock Exposition, the world's largest all-breed livestock show, will be November 6-19 in Louisville, at the Kentucky Fair and Exposition Center. The NAILE is sponsored by the Kentucky Department of Agriculture, Commonwealth of Kentucky, and total NAILE premiums will exceed \$300,000.



Marshall Ritter, Penn State pomologist, center, explained the planting and care of new strawberry patches to growers. Ritter recommended planting the variety, Red Chief, since it produces fewer white and more secondary berries.