

Penn State rates strawberry varieties

UNIVERSITY PARK — Strawberry varieties rated superior for freezing have been named in taste panel tests at Penn State. Earliglow and Darrow varieties were given the best overall ratings for freezing quality.

The taste panelists rated seven well-known strawberry varieties for texture, sweetness, flavor, and color. Earliglow and Darrow also ripen the earliest of the varieties tested for freezing. The other five varieties — in order of ripening — were Redchief, Surecrop, Delite, Jerseybelle, and Vesper.

The studies were directed by Roland R. Daniels, Penn State horticulturist. Daniels said the ratings could help home gardeners wanting to plant strawberries this spring.

Vesper was rated nearly as high as Darrow and Earliglow for quality of texture after freezing. Redchief and Jerseybelle were rated lowest of all varieties for texture.

Darrow was rated highest for sweetness, followed by Vesper and Earliglow. Delite and Jerseybelle were judged to be the least sweet tasting.

Earliglow received the best rating for flavor. Jerseybelle had the lowest flavor rating.

All varieties except Surecrop were similar in ratings for color. Jerseybelle and Surecrop received the lowest overall ratings.

Daniels said several new varieties have come on the market since the taste testing was completed. He described Allstar as a midseason variety that has given good yields of high quality fruit.

"Before planting large areas to any new strawberry, try a small planting to see how the variety does under your conditions," he advised.

He mentioned two new ever-bearing varieties worthy of trying—Tristar and Tribute. These have been tested at the Rock Springs Horticultural Research Farm in Centre County and produced high quality fruit.

To grow some of the better varieties for freezing, Daniels advised buying only certified plants, essentially disease-free, from nurseries or garden centers. He said strawberries can be planted as soon as the soil is workable.

After preparing the soil, follow

planting instructions carefully, he added. If plants are set too deep, the crowns will rot. If planted too shallowly, exposed roots will dry out and the plants will die. When flower buds appear the first year, remove them to encourage runner formation.

For everbearing varieties, the second set of blossoms will occur about 60 days after the first. These can be left on for a fall crop. For information on fertilizer requirements, mulching, and disease and insect control, consult county agents of the Cooperative Extension Service.

The Penn State experiments measured other factors related to quality of frozen strawberries. For example, "soluble solids" is a term for the amount of sugars contributing to sweetness. Percent of soluble solids was highest — meaning best — in Vesper and Earliglow, and lowest in Darrow and Surecrop.

Another factor related to flavor

is titratable acidity, which gives some estimate of a berry's tartness. Surecrop and Darrow had the highest ratings for titratable acidity, meaning they were the most tart. Jerseybelle was the least tart.

The Penn State fruit scientist said a strawberry's acidity or alkalinity, measured as pH, influences color. A pH of 3.39 or

lower, a very acid condition, is reflected in strawberries with the best red color. In the tests, Vesper had the brightest berries and the lowest pH. In contrast, Delite had the highest pH and the lowest quality color.

Berries were similar in size among most of the seven varieties tested. Depth of color was least for Redchief, a variety usually having a white center.

Conservation demo planned

LEBANON — The Cedar Crest FFA in cooperation with the Lebanon County Conservation District and the Soil Conservation Service is sponsoring an afternoon of conservation demonstrations. The demonstrations will be held at the intersection of Evergreen Rd. and South Lincoln Ave., Lebanon, near the Cedar Crest High School on Wednesday, starting at 1 P.M. and continuing into the early evening.

Demonstrations will include construction of terraces with moldboard plows and the new moldboard to chisel plow conversion unit that can be used by landowners with small acreages.

For more information and the specific times of the demonstrations, call Karl Hellerick, Lebanon County Soil Conservation at 272-3377.

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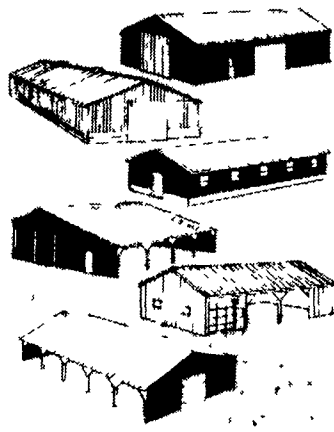
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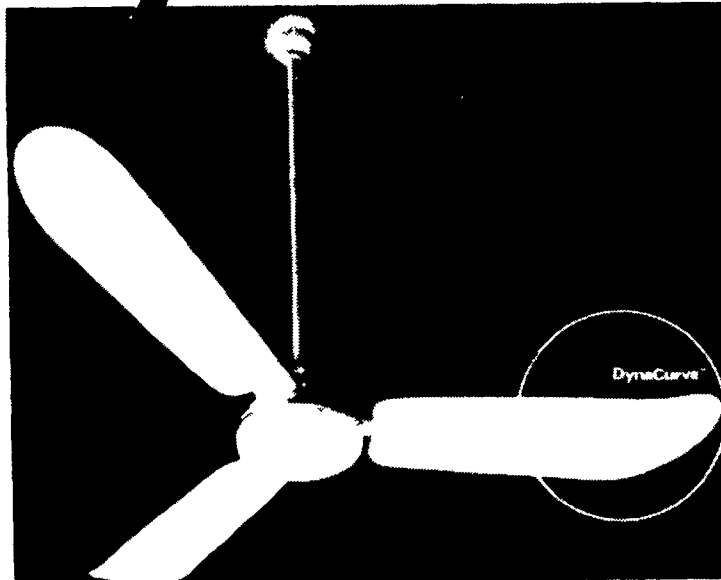
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