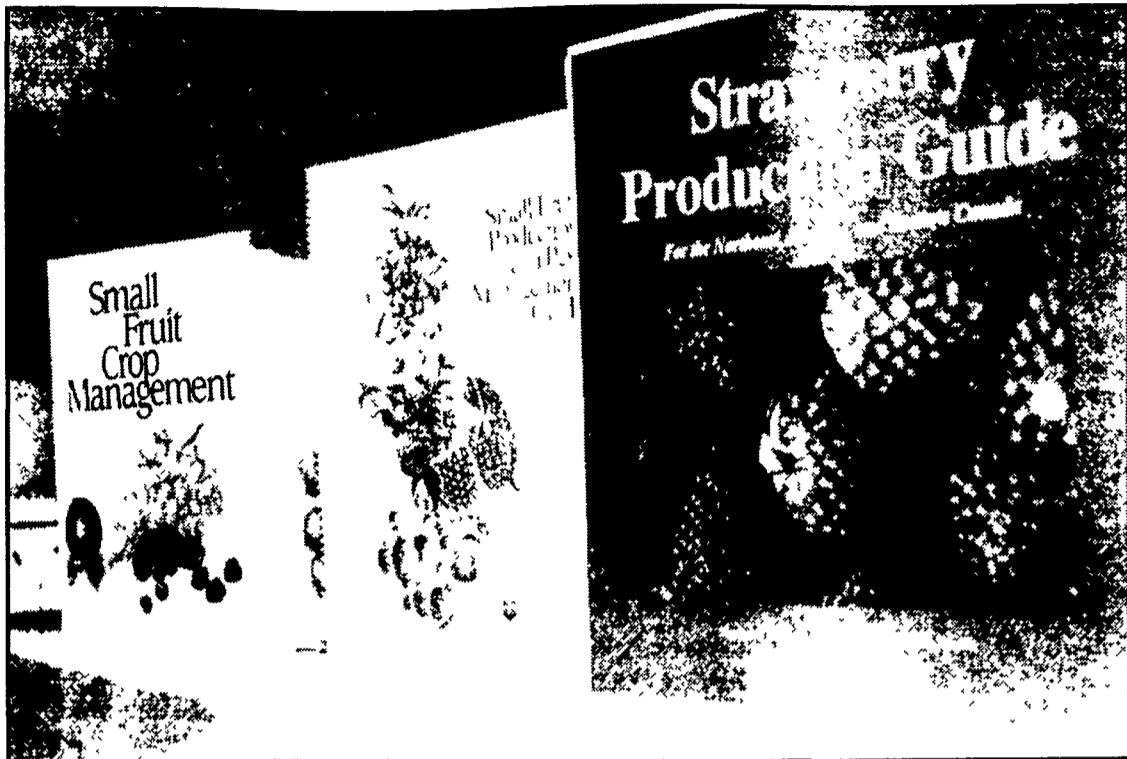


At Strawberry Renovation, Bud Set, Fertilizer And Moisture Are Critical



Ressler said there are several production guides available. They include, from left, *The Small Fruit Crop Management Book*, ed. by Gene J. Galletta and David G. Himelrick, from Prentice Hall, 1990; *The Small Fruit Production and Pest Management Guide*, available from Penn State (to be updated soon), for \$10; and *The NRAES Strawberry Production Guide*, covering the Northeast, Midwest, and East, available for \$45.

ANDY ANDREWS
Lancaster Farming Staff
MORGANTOWN (Berks Co.) — When it comes to growing that huge, lush, red strawberry, too much — or too little — soil moisture can make or break yields.

Many growers sometimes fail to realize that bud formation, from mid-August to September, provides the fruit that will be harvested the following spring. According to Leon Ressler, Lancaster County extension agent, it is critical to renovate, supply nitrogen, and ensure the plants get enough water at bud formation, which can greatly affect next season's yield.

Moisture is crucial to the strawberry plant, Ressler noted, since the roots only

extend to about six inches beneath the soil surface.

Another critical time, Ressler noted, is at time of fruit enlarging. About 1-2 inches of rainfall per week is necessary at this critical time in the late spring, before harvest.

Last summer's devastating drought affected many who didn't irrigate. But the extreme heat was worse — it literally caused the strawberries to shut down. The July heat, Ressler said, with several 100-degree days, was particularly hard on strawberry growers "because it happened after renovation," he said.

Though overhead irrigation did work to lower daytime temperatures, at night, temperatures were still high and even by morning, the "fields felt like mid-afternoon," Ressler said.

But a combination of cool and wet weather can be detrimental for the fruit. In the fruit sizing stage, strawberries prefer cool and dry weather to set carbohydrates and to enlarge.

Irrigation pays off for conventional growers. Lancaster County experienced a freeze on April 13 this year, when temperatures dropped to 26 degrees. Those with overhead irrigation simply used the nighttime water sprays to insulate the fruit from frost and freeze damage.

In the season, too much rain can cause gray mold to develop. The fungus, which starts as a blossom infection, shows up as a gray powder on the fruit.

The plasticulture systems use raised beds with the strawberries growing on a plastic mulch with trickle irrigation under the mulch. During extended rainy weather, the fruit can become soft from lying on wet plastic for lengthy periods of time.

Conventional growers use a straw bedding to ensure good drainage when irrigating and to keep the fruit clean.

The good thing about the abundant spring rains was that water supplies were recharged. Those supplies prove ideal for growers in years such as last.

(Turn to Page 10)

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48	4.6	2.38"	980'	210'	130	70AT885	\$16,990
50	4.6	2.5"	930'	210'	150	75AT820	\$17,213
68.3	5.3	3.0"	1000'	240'	200	90AT870	\$20,150
67.2	5.9	3.0"	1120'	240'	200	90AT985	\$21,950
61	7.0	3.0"	1250'	240'	180	90AT1250	\$26,350
90.7	6.8	3.75"	1180'	275'	275	110AT1050	\$27,230
90.2	7.6	3.75"	1310'	260'	275	110AT1180	\$28,700
88.7	8.3	3.75"	1440'	260'	275	110AT1312	\$33,250
135	7.8	4.00"	1200'	300'	450	120AT1050	\$33,180
176	7.5	4.20"	1150'	300'	500	125AT985	\$33,680
88.2	9.3	3.54"	1640'	260'	260	110AT1510	\$35,200
131	9.0	4.00"	1410'	280'	400	120AT1250	\$35,100
139	9.1	4.10"	1410'	300'	400	125AT1250	\$35,900



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