

FROM FARM to SCHOOL – CROPS of NORTH CAROLINA



A VISIT 
to the
STRAWBERRY
 **PATCH**

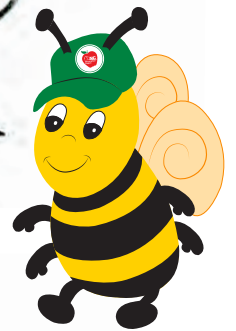
Story by
Heather Barnes and Karen Baltimore
Illustrations by Karen Baltimore

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Hi! I'm Farmer Bee.
Welcome to the farm!



A VISIT
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This book is dedicated to the farmers of North Carolina who grow strawberries and to the school nutrition professionals that prepare and serve strawberries to our students.

This project coordinated by:
Heather Barnes, Marketing Specialist
North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
and
Karen Baltimore, Graphic designer and illustrator

Thank you....

Kevin Hardison, Marketing Specialist, North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
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Allyson Brake, Intern, North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
Michelle Shooter, North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services



And special thanks to...

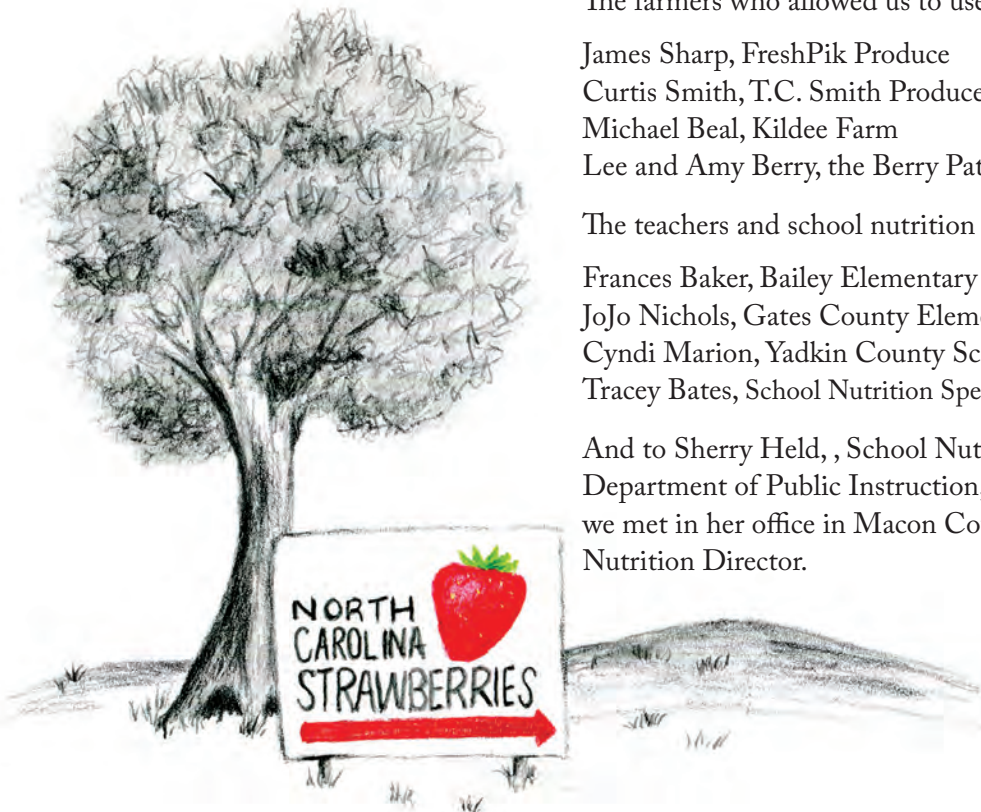
The farmers who allowed us to use photographs of their farms:

James Sharp, FreshPik Produce
Curtis Smith, T.C. Smith Produce
Michael Beal, Kildee Farm
Lee and Amy Berry, the Berry Patch

The teachers and school nutrition professionals who reviewed this project:

Frances Baker, Bailey Elementary teacher and Ag in the Classroom Ambassador
JoJo Nichols, Gates County Elementary teacher and Ag in the Classroom Ambassador
Cyndi Marion, Yadkin County School Nutrition Director
Tracey Bates, School Nutrition Specialist, North Carolina Department of Public Instruction

And to Sherry Held, , School Nutrition Regional Consultant, North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, who suggested a project like this back when we met in her office in Macon County, where she was serving as the School Nutrition Director.



Design and illustration by Karen Baltimore
For more of her work, please visit
www.karenbaltimore.com



Have you ever wondered where the strawberries served at your school come from?



They come from farms like this one in North Carolina! You may see strawberries all year long. Peak harvest for North Carolina strawberries is April to May.

Come with us and we'll show you!

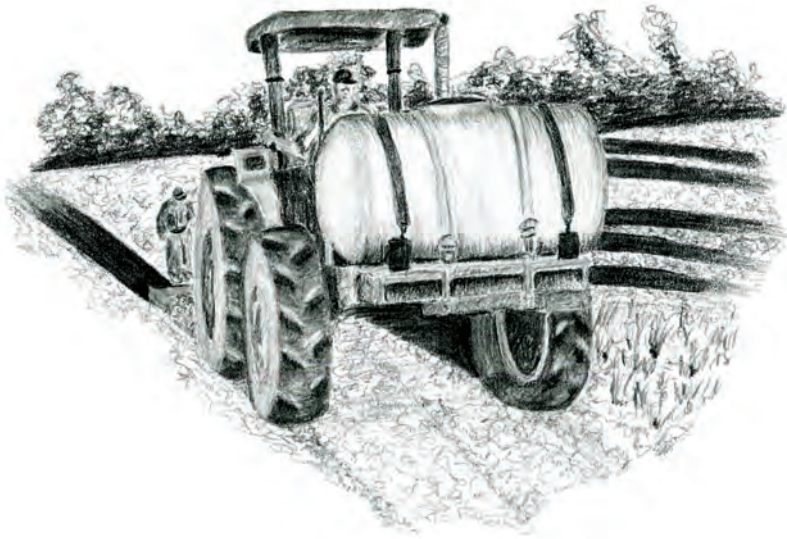




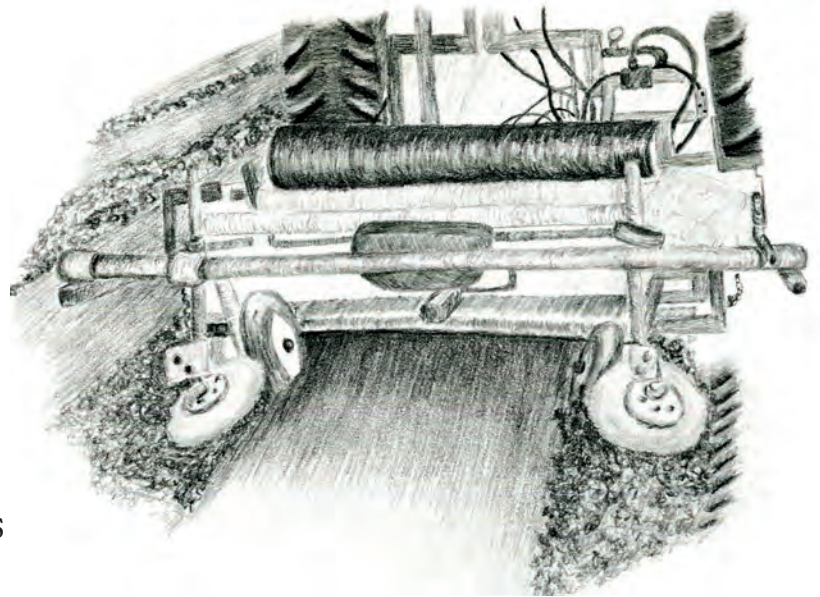
Did you know
that it took that
long to grow
strawberries?



Farmers who grow strawberries start getting the soil ready in the summer. First they use a tractor and disk to plow the soil. Next, the soil is shaped into raised beds.



Then, using a bedder, black plastic is laid over the beds.



The plastic prevents weeds, keeps the soil warm in the winter and holds moisture in the soil.



The beds are covered in plastic and ready for strawberry plants. This process is called plasticulture.



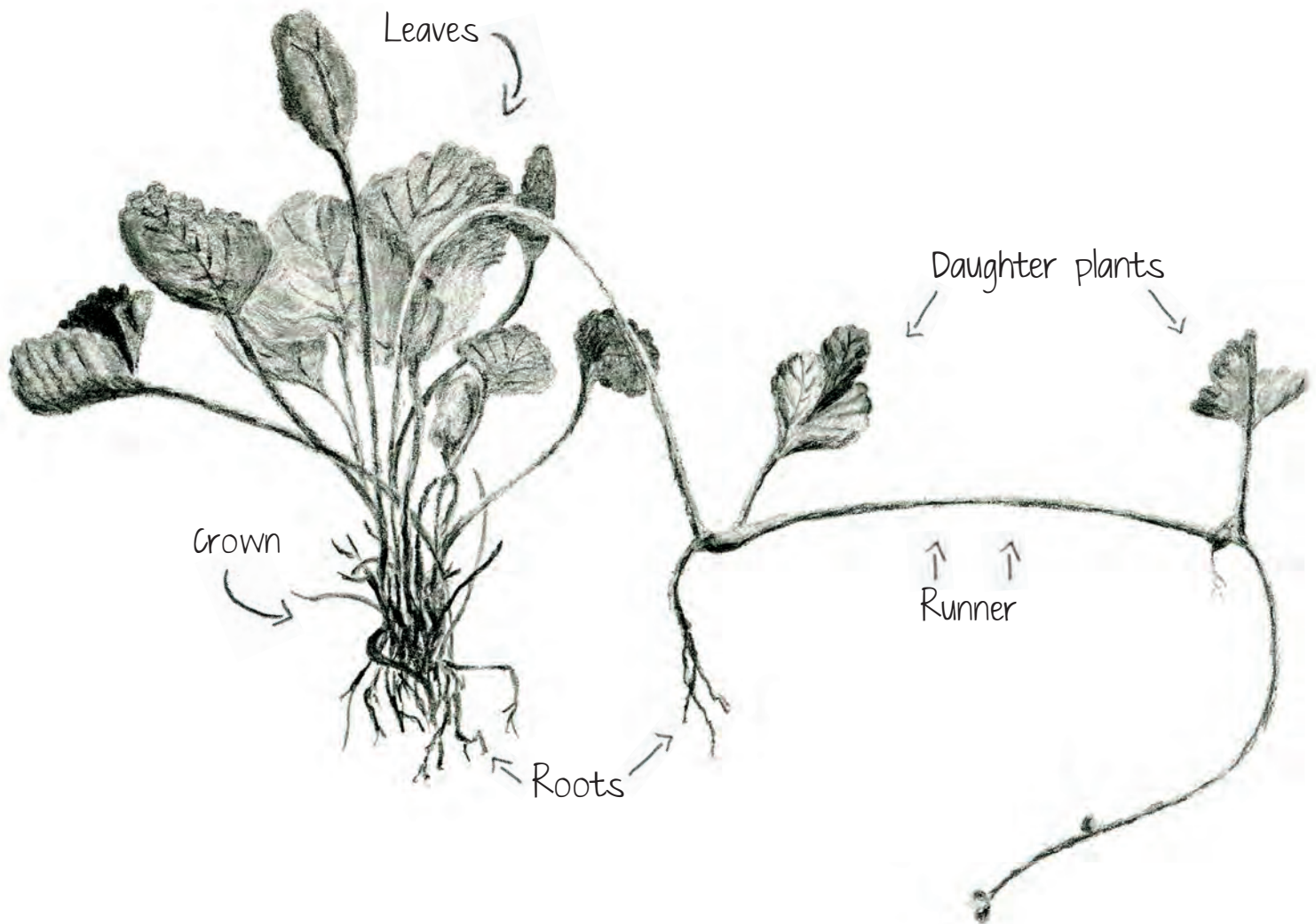
The bedder also lays irrigation tape under the plastic. The farmer will use the irrigation tape to irrigate, or water, the plants.



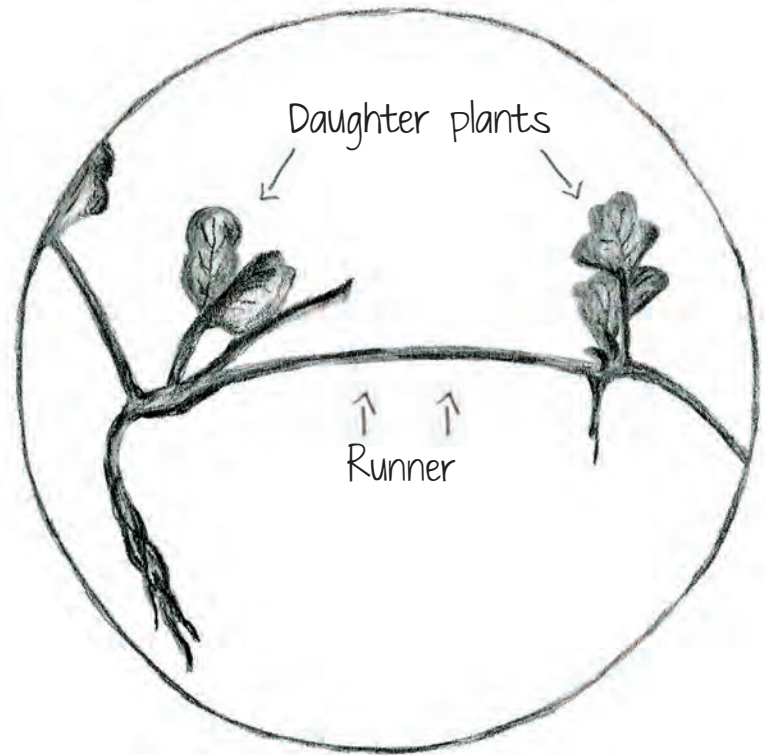
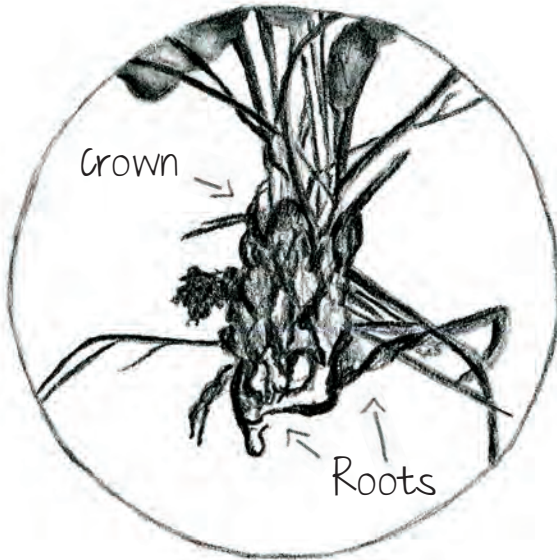
September is planting time! Farmers do not plant strawberry seeds. Instead they plant plugs or bareroot plants. 15,000 plants are planted per acre, all by hand! The farmer will place new plants in the field next year.



Do you know the parts of a strawberry plant? The roots are underground. The plant gets nutrients and water through its roots. Strawberry plants reproduce by sending out runners, or stems.



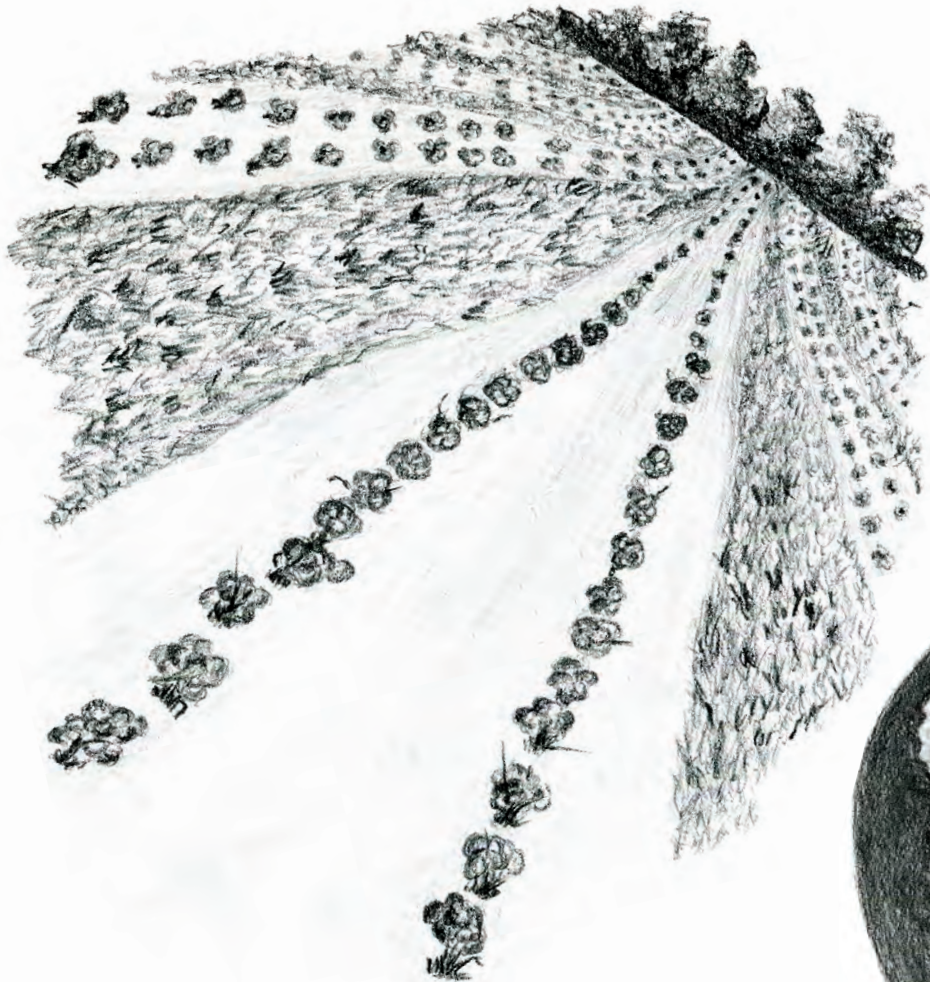
One plant can
produce between
30 to 50 runners!



The dark part below the leaves is the crown. Strawberry plants like their crown to be planted above ground. Did you know that strawberry plants also make daughter plants? Daughter plants grow at the tip of the runners.

Here are the newly planted strawberry plants.
The plants are small right now, but they will
keep growing until spring.

One acre can
produce over 20,000
pounds of
strawberries in the
spring season!



The farmer checks on the plants often to make sure they are growing well. Flowers will begin to bloom in February and March. These little plants will grow lots of strawberries. I can't wait to taste them!



Farmers can use row covers to encourage plants to grow before they go dormant, or stop actively growing, in December. Bags of rocks are used to hold the covers in place.





After the plants flower, they must be protected from temperatures below 32 degrees Fahrenheit. When it gets this cold, farmers use overhead irrigation to spray water on the plants during the day and night. The water freezes and insulates the blooms like a blanket. Row covers can also be used.

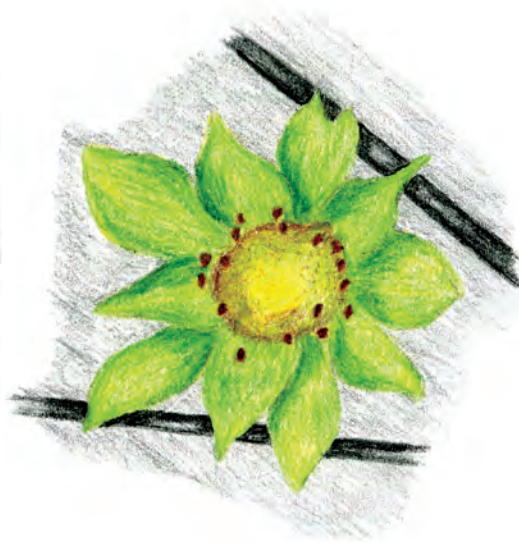




As the weather warms, plants start to grow. Honey bees visit the plants, carrying pollen from flower to flower. With the help of bees, farmers are able to grow lots and lots of strawberries!



Strawberries begin as a flower.



Next, a green berry starts to grow out of the flower's center.



The berry ripens until it is big, red, and juicy. Did you know that the seeds of a strawberry grow on the outside of the fruit?

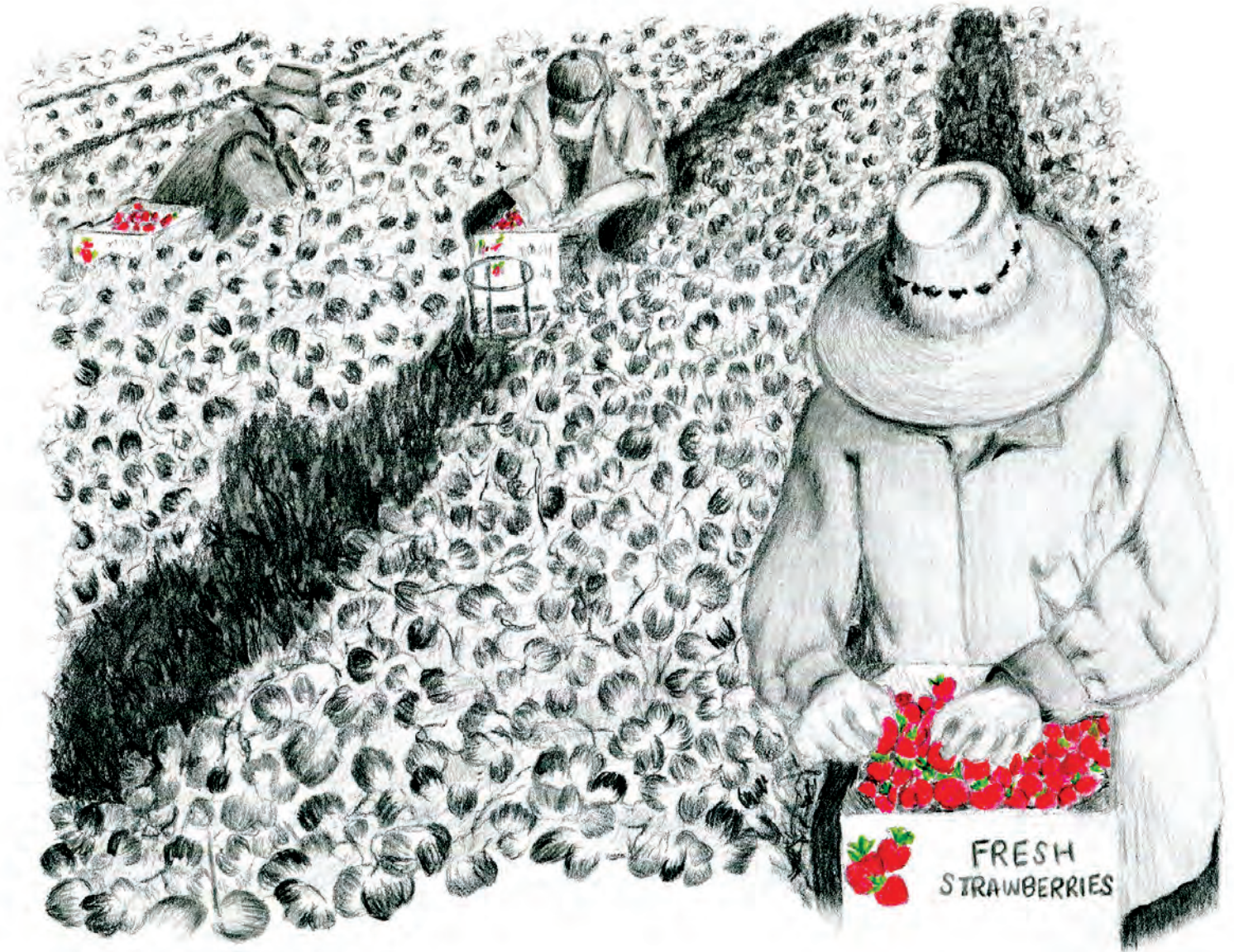
In about one month the flowers will ripen into big, red strawberries. I can't wait to taste those juicy berries!

Strawberries are
the only fruit that
have their seeds on
the outside.



The berries ripen at different times. There can be flowers, green fruit and red fruit on the plant at the same time. The berries won't ripen any more after they are picked, so only choose ripe, red berries.

The farmer has many workers who hand pick all of the strawberries. Harvest time is from late April through May. Did you know that May is Strawberry Month in North Carolina?





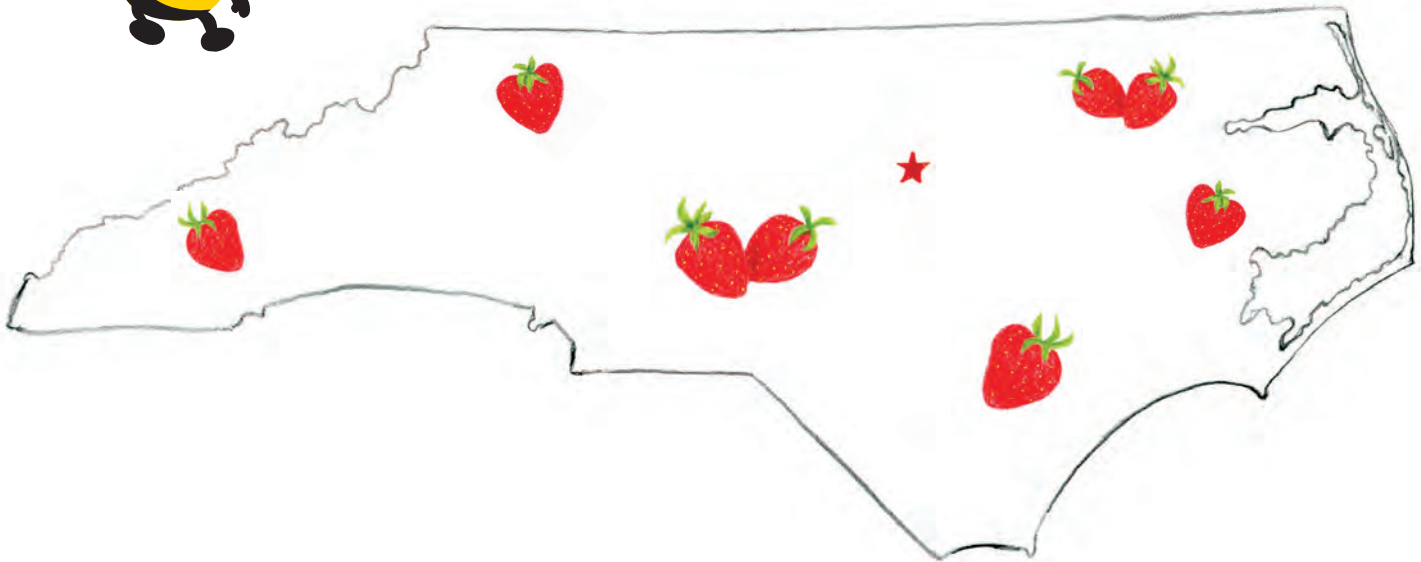
The berries are put into different containers based on where they are going. The plastic containers shown above are called clamshell containers.



Some of the strawberries come to schools like yours. Others are sold at roadside stands and grocery stores. Many farms even allow you to come pick your own berries. Doesn't that sound like fun?



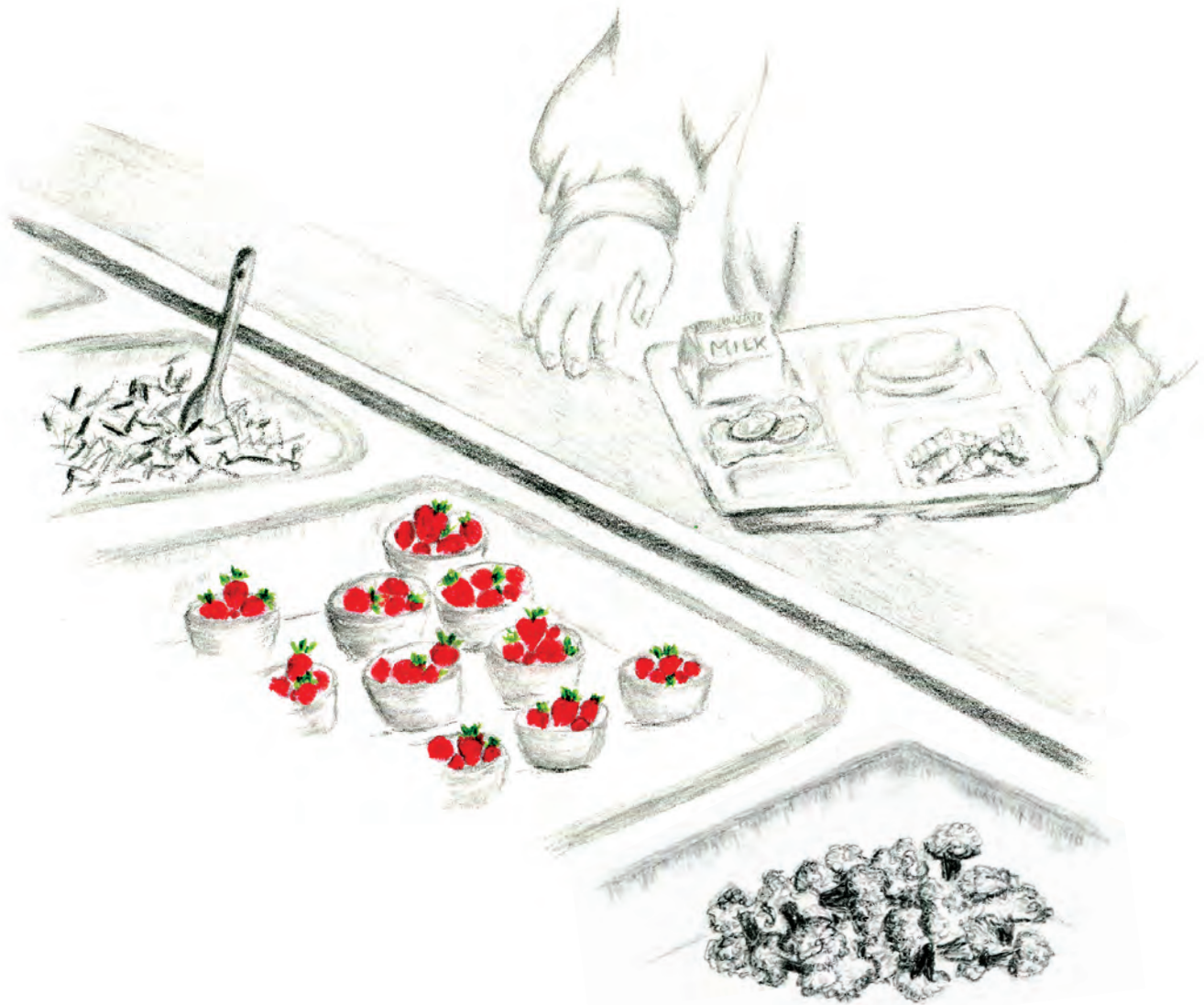
Almost all strawberries
grown in North Carolina
are eaten right here
in the state.



Strawberries are grown on farms all over North Carolina. Do you know a strawberry farmer near you?

A big truck from the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services drives to farms across the state to pick up strawberries and deliver them to your school.



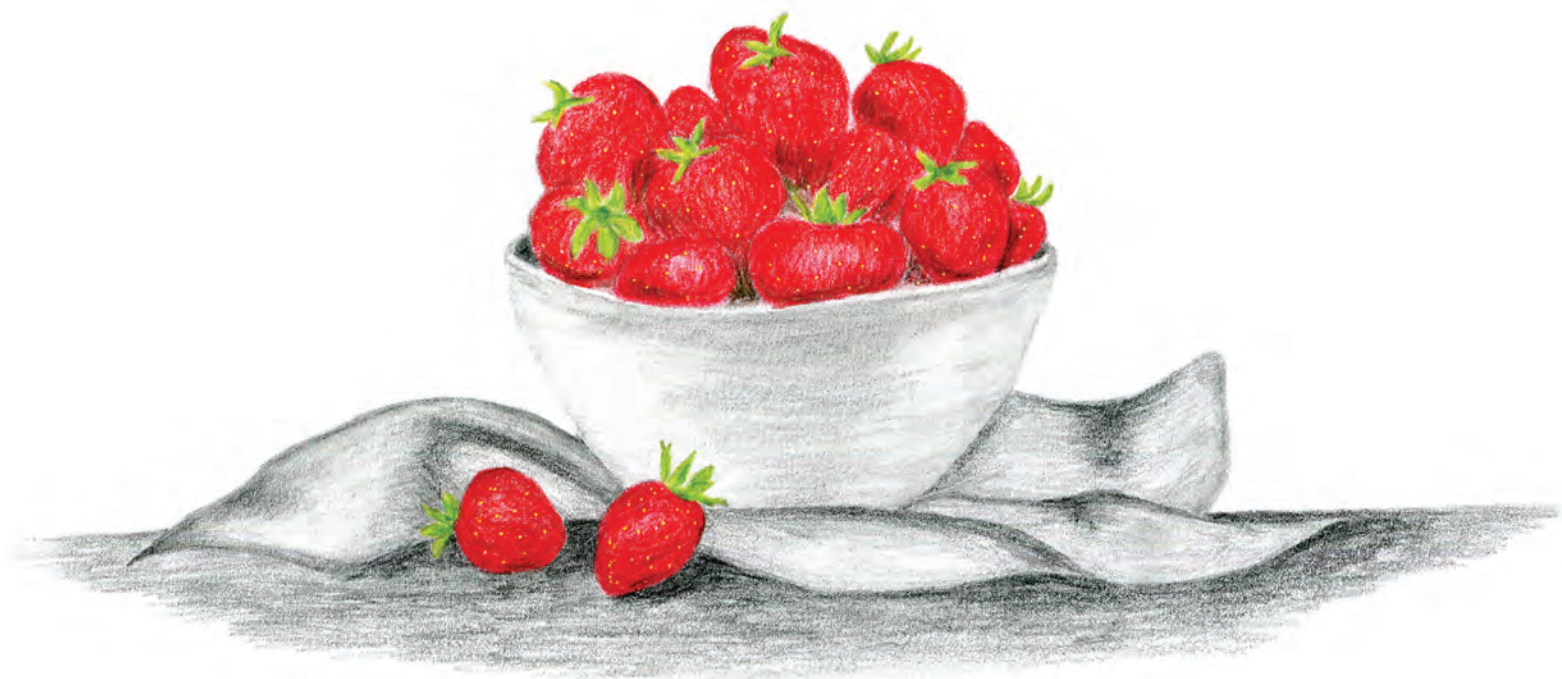


The strawberries are taken to schools that participate in the North Carolina Farm to School program. School nutrition professionals prepare the strawberries for school meals. Can you find the strawberries in this picture?

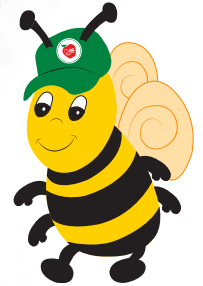
Red, juicy strawberries for lunch. My favorite!



Strawberries are not just tasty. They are good for you too! Strawberries are packed with vitamin C and potassium. They are delicious in yogurt, mixed in smoothies or all by themselves!



Here's a recipe
to try at home.
Don't forget to ask
an adult for help!



Easy Strawberry Smoothie

1 cup vanilla yogurt
1/2 cup fresh strawberries,
washed and stems removed
1/2 banana
1/4 cup apple juice

Toss all the ingredients into a
blender and blend until smooth.



Note: If you don't have a blender, mash up the
fruit, put all the ingredients in a container with
a tight-fitting lid, place the lid on and shake.



Yummy! I love North Carolina strawberries! Do you?



The North Carolina Farm to School program has been supplying school cafeterias with fresh, NC grown produce since 1997. The program is coordinated by the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. For more information, please visit ncfarmtoschool.com.



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www.ncfarmtoschool.com