

A Year in the Life of a NC STRAWBERRY



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North Carolina ranks in the top four states in the United States in strawberry production.



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Farmers get the soil ready in summer, using equipment to make raised beds. A bedder is used to lay black plastic over the bed.



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The plastic will warm the soil in winter and control weeds. Irrigation tape under the plastic is used to water the plants.



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Workers plant plugs that have a rootball or bareroot plants.



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Most planting is done by hand; workers set out 15,000 plants per acre.



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Some farmers use row covers in the fall to encourage plants to grow bigger before they go dormant in the winter.



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Plants start to flower in February or March in eastern NC and April or May in western NC. It takes one month for the bloom to ripen into a strawberry.



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To protect flowers from freezing temperatures farmers use row covers or water to insulate the flowers. If the flower freezes it will not produce a strawberry.



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Strawberry season starts in coastal NC in mid-April. By mid-May, strawberries are available from farms across the state. All strawberries are picked by hand.



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Plants have flowers, green strawberries and red strawberries at the same time. Strawberries will not ripen after being picked so only red, ripe strawberries should be chosen.



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Most NC strawberries are sold at Pick-Your-Own farms, farmers markets or roadside stands. Some farmers also sell strawberries to grocery stores, restaurants and schools.



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NC Strawberries are a low calorie, fat free, nutritious snack available every April and May.



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