

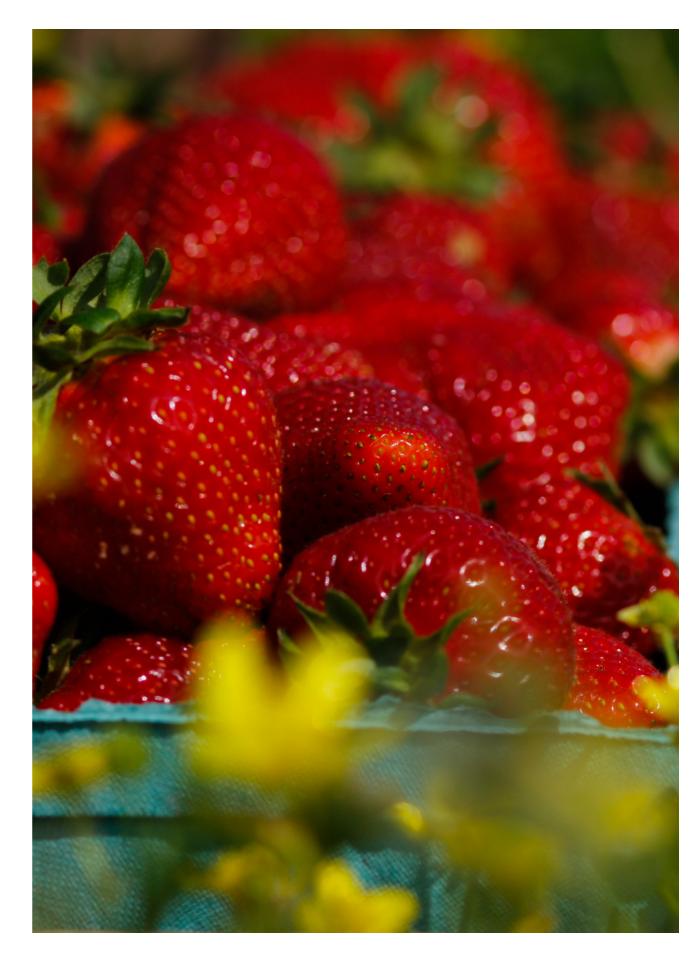
### **Berry Good Strawberries**

John Dysinger – AdAgrA 2025

### EVERYBODY LOVES STRAWBERRIES...

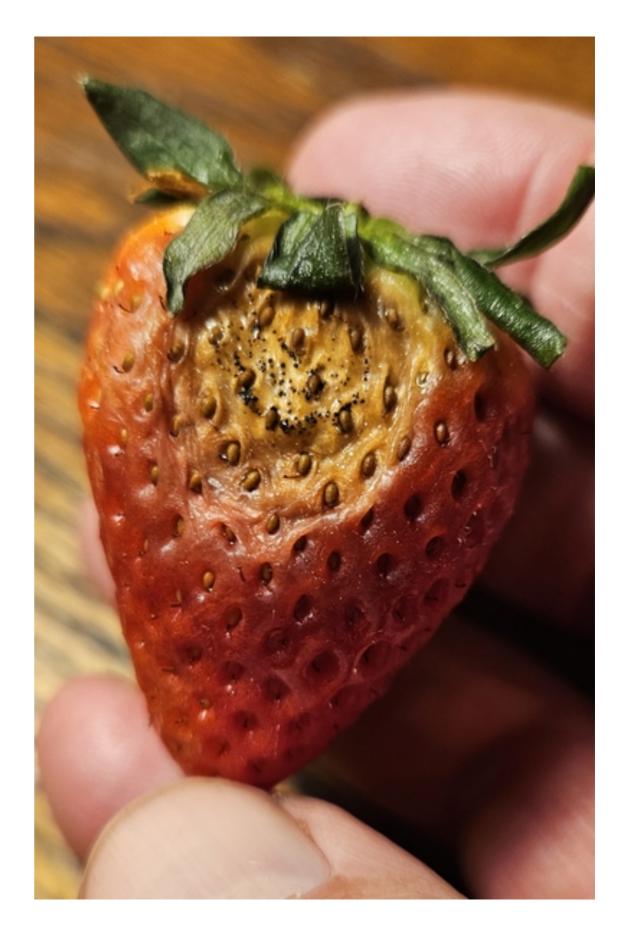
When the sun is shining, and the birds are singing, and the freshness of Spring is in the air....

But, they have no idea what goes into bringing that fruit to maturity! Make sure to count the cost before you dive in!



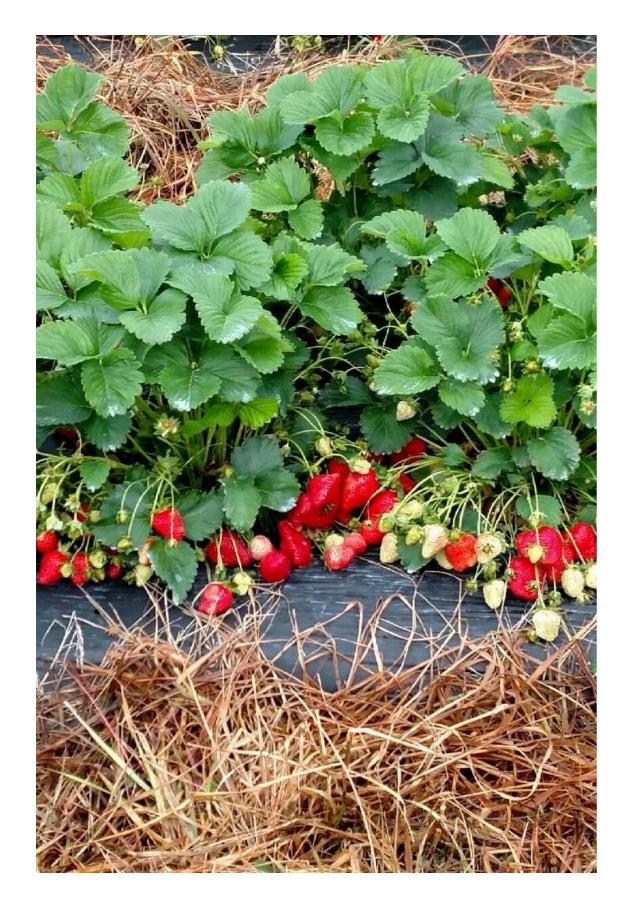
### **Spoiler Alert!**

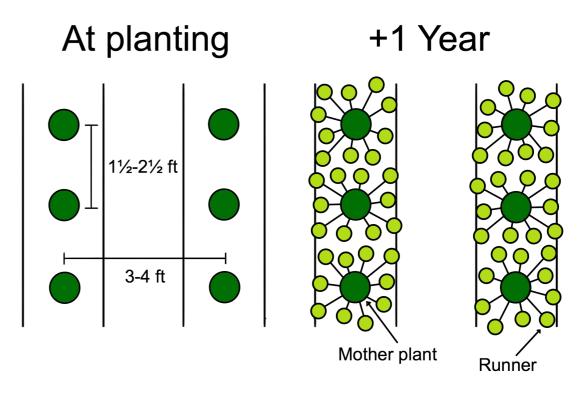
Much of what I say in this presentation is now up-inthe-air because of a major new disease called Neo-P (Neopestalotiopsis). All major Eastern suppliers tested positive for the disease in the Fall of 2024. Western nurseries have not been effected (yet). Stay informed!



### 2 Main Growing Methods:

Matted Row Pros:	Plasticulture Pros:	Matted Row Cons:	Plasticulture Cons:
Lower initial investment cost	Increased picking efficiency	WEEDS!	Higher establish- ment costs
Plantings can last 3+ years	Better weed/ disease control	Slower picking	Specialized equipment (helpful)
Adapted to colder climates	Higher yields and bigger berries	Potential for higher disease pressure	Re-plant every year
Less risk of frost damage	Less ongoing maintenance	1 year from planting to first harvest	Greater frost risk







#### 4 Main Ways to Start Strawberries:





Runners

Plugs



### **Strawberry Plasticulture 101**

A Few Tips and Techniques

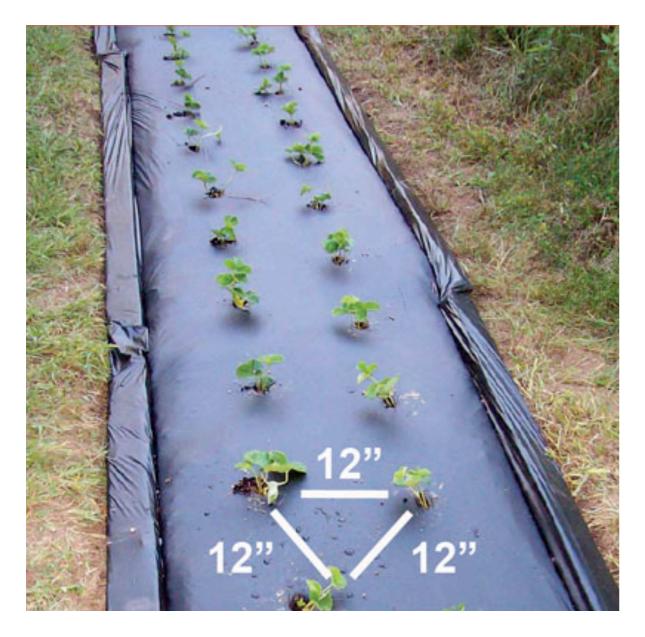
# Timing is (almost) Everything

- Tips set the end of August (in Middle TN) under mist.
- Plugs planted in the field the end of September (or even the first week of October planting dates get later with increasingly warmer Falls)
- If you wait a week past target planting dates, yields can begin to suffer.
- Planting dates for Northern growers would be earlier; Southern growers would be later.

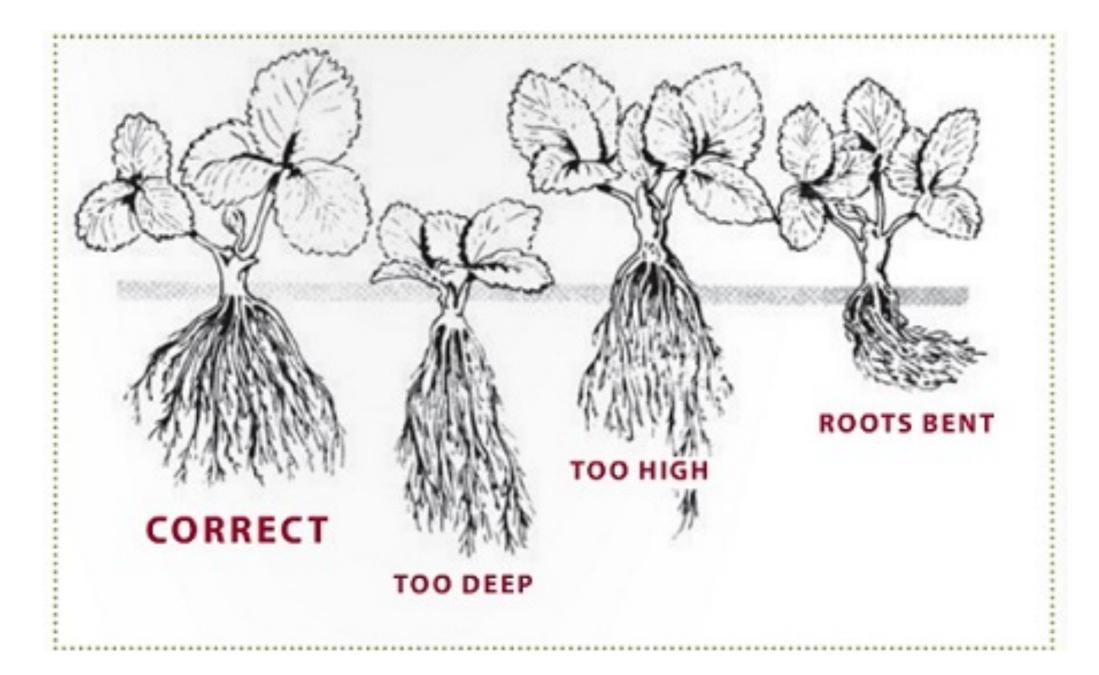




# Making your Bed(s)



- Bed recommendations:
  - 6-8" high, 30" wide
  - Plants 12-14" apart
  - 1 row of drip tape down the center of the bed
- Can be done by hand on a small scale (see photo).
- On a larger scale, buy a tractor pulled bed maker/mulch layer!
- Can also use landscape fabric, but you will get 30% less yield.



# Planting depth is critical

Too high or too deep can compromise or kill your plants!

# "Baby" Your Plants in the Fall

- Irrigate faithfully after planting.
  Don't let soil get dried out.
- Protect from deer and other pests.
- Try to keep your plants in the ideal temperature range during the first couple months after planting. (70's in the daytime, 50's at night)
- Two branch crowns by Thanksgiving is ideal.



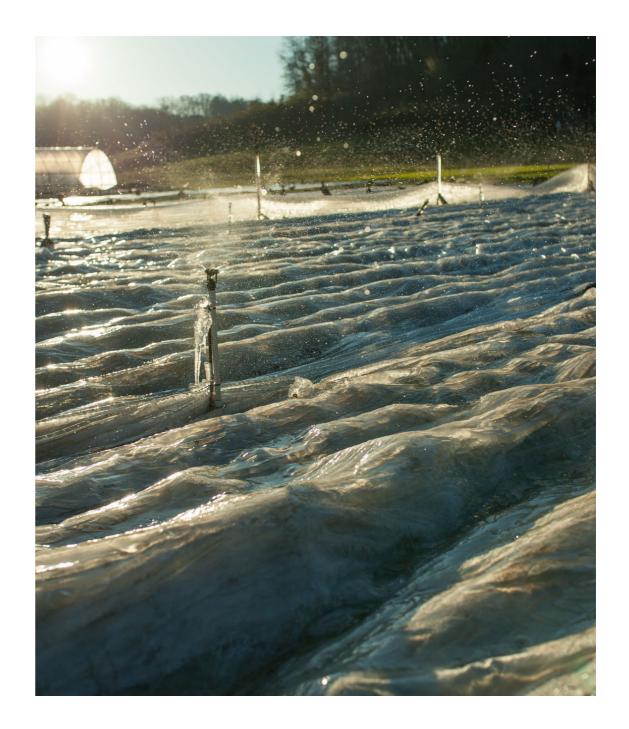
## Toughen Them Up in the Winter



- Weed and "sanitize" (take off dead leaves, runners, flowers, etc.) ideally in late Nov. and again in late Feb.
- Try to let them go into dormancy slowly.
- Only protect them (with row cover) if temperatures go below 10 degrees or if the plants are not dormant.

# **Protect Them in the Spring**

- Plants begin blooming in March. They must be protected from frost — either by sprinklers or by floating row cover.
- Moisture is deadly to strawberry fruit! Keeping rain off is ideal.
- Weekly spraying is helpful (ideally with a mistblower)





### **Enjoy them April-June**

\*Pick at least 3 times/week \*If weather is hot, pick them "close" and drip irrigate often.

# **Rain Protection**



- Raised, plastic-covered beds
- Individual plants with airflow around each one.
- Organic fungicide regime.
  Oxidate/Serenade/Trilogy/
  Double Nickel
- Caterpillar Tunnels over plants in the Spring

#### **Common Strawberry Diseases:**

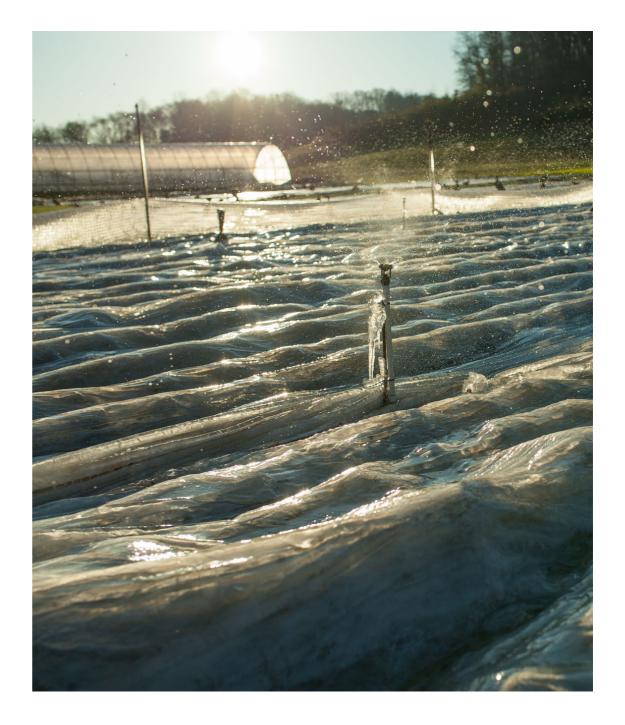






# **Frost Protection**

- Traditionally done with sprinklers. Sprinklers must be kept going until air temperatures rise above freezing. We like Senninger Wobblers. Need 45-60 gal./minute/ acre.
- Floating row covers can be an easier solution. We use 1.0 oz/ sq.yd. Covers may need to be doubled or tripled if the temperatures really drop. Ideally you need a thermometer under the row cover to monitor temperatures.
- If you want to be really safe, use sprinklers on top of row covers!



# **Pest Protection**

- 7.5' Deer Fencing (Trade name: Tenax Cintoflex)
- 8' t-posts every 25'
- Yellow, electric fence insulators on the top of each post.
- Hang fencing from the insulators and drape it out on the ground.

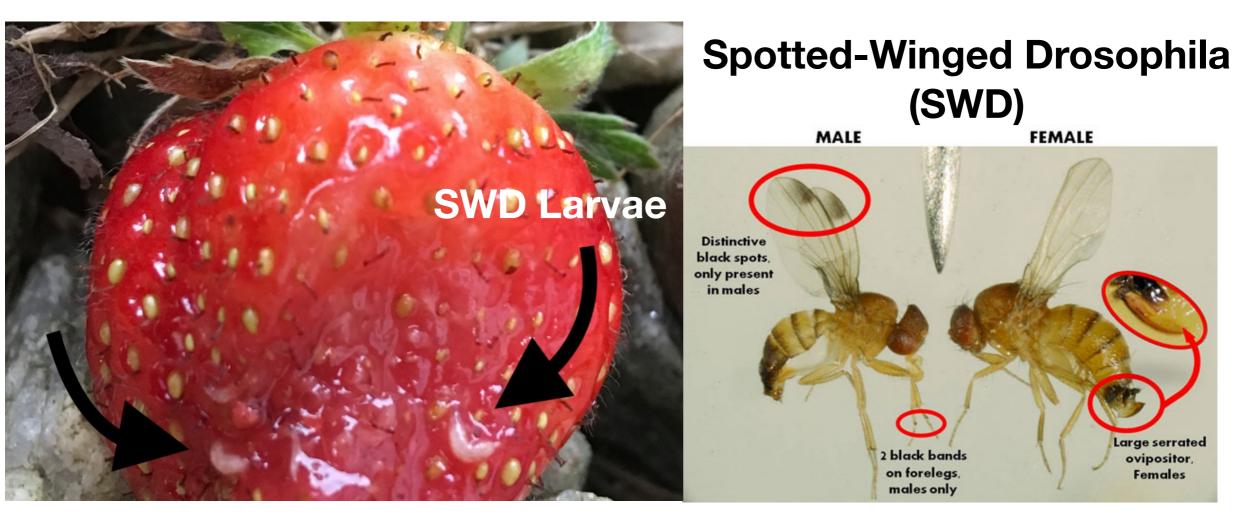












# **Bonus:**

For more information, advancing	refer to the AEA Product Usage Guide at pecoag.com/product-usage-guide
MacroPak™	
An all-purpose macronutrient b	blend.
This product is intended for use according to an ap with the USDA National Organic Program (NOP) rule certified organic crop production. Verify with your o	opproved organic system plan. All materials comply es and other international bio-organic regulations for organic certifier before using
Application Rates And Timing	When Tank Mixing
Foliar: Apply up to 2 quarts per acre every 7 to 10 days Fertigation: Apply up to 3 gallons per acre every	A jar test is recommended: Prepare a small amount of the proposed mix and allow it to stand in a glass jar overnight
7 to 10 days Sidedress: Apply up to 2 gallons per acre	observing for signs of incompatibility. Ideally, a sample of the test mix should then be sprayed on a small area of the target crop and observed for 3 to 4 days for any phytotoxic effects.
Check with your crop consultant for specific application rates and other uses.	Agitation is the key to usability of this product. AEA products involve tiny particles which are far too small to clog filters;
Handling	however, if they are inadequately diluted or agitated before or during application, there is a possibility of problems with spray equipment. Consider using an eductor nozzle to agitate
Store in a cool dry area out of direct sunlight. This product has been tested to store safely down to 35°F.	prior to use. Compatibility and/or performance cannot be guaranteed when combined with other products.
Crystallization or sedimentation may occur below 35°F or above 95°F. Shake or stir before use to dissolve any residue on the bottom of the container. Do not pre-mix	
or store in diluted form. Always use product within 8 hours of diluting. All foliar sprays perform best when	
applied early morning or late afternoon. The product may not be applied near water, storm	
drains or drainage ditches, or to any impervious surface. The product may not be applied if heavy rain is expected. The product may only be applied to the intended application site.	
	Disclaimer: AEA products are sold "as is" and all warranties, express or
	implied, are disclaimed. In no event shall AEA or its affiliates be liable for any damages of any kind for the storage or use of this product. The buyer assumes all responsibility for the use of any AEA products.
	Inc
Advancing Eco Agriculture	
Advancing Eco Agriculture, 4551 Parks West Road, Middlefield, OH	44062
	44062

- We had our best crop ever this last year using products from Advancing Ecological Agriculture (advancingecoag.com)
- It combines weekly foliar feeding with weekly (or bi-weekly) fertigation.
- It is a serious time and money investment, but the results speak for themselves.

### **Resources:**

- These are plant sources I have used and been satisfied with. There are MANY others out there that may be just as good or better.
  - 1. <u>noursefarms.com</u>. MA (I consider this to be the premier source for small fruit plants.)
  - 2. indianaberry.com. IN
  - 3. isons.com. GA
  - 4. cottlefarms.com. NC (where we buy our runner tips)
- These are great, trusted information sources for answering your small fruit questions.
  - 5. <u>attra.ncat.org</u>. Look in their publication library for excellent, wellresearched articles on organic strawberry production — plus many other fruits and vegetables. Excellent resource!
  - 6. <u>smallfruits.org</u>. Small fruit information specifically for the Southeast. Look for the Strawberry Plasticulture Production Guide.