



berry-mg
Vol. 8, no. 66
September 5, 2007

Strawberry Drought Advisory No. 3

Dear Growers and Agents,

The clock for the 2007-2008 strawberry season is now ticking HARD, and some very difficult decisions have to be made quickly by strawberry growers on how to best manage their limited water resources to accomplish land preparations, fertility applications, fumigation (especially important on land that is not being rotated), and planting:

1) **Land preparation** needs at least 0.6-0.7 inch/A (~16,000 to 19,000 gallons)

Mountains need to do land preparation early next week at latest (no fumigation possible at this late stage)

Piedmont northern piedmont counties must begin IMMEDIATELY if planning to also fumigate? (minimum 2 week plantback)

Lower piedmont a little more time left, but the outlook for rain is still quite poor over the next 2 weeks, so it is very likely you will need to irrigate the land

Sandhills same dilemma as lower piedmont

ENC Northeast (Tidewater) same dilemma as lower piedmont and Sandhills

ENC Central areas: you still have another 2 weeks, but try to get land preparation and fumigation done early in the week of Sept 24 (Mon) in Sampson county, for example, a good planting window is in 2nd week Oct

ENC Southern areas: you have the most flexibility, and can try to wait it out for a good rain for another 3 weeks. Even though the 2 week outlook is not very promising, something may happen in that following week? The real problem with this waiting game is that if the precipitation comes too heavily, you may start to run into an opposite problem of field conditions being too wet. It may be a good hedge to go ahead and irrigate some of your land soon to improve the odds of your staying on schedule

2) **Preplant fertility** see recommendations in:

<http://www.smallfruits.org/SmallFruitsRegGuide/Guides/2005culturalguidepart1bs1.pdf>

3) **Fumigation** have critical 2-3 week plantback, depending on fumigant. For choice of materials, see p 319, <http://ipm.ncsu.edu/agchem/7-14through7-17.pdf>

4) Transplanting by your regular **planting window** you may have a little wiggle room here if the next 90 days are warmer than normal (as projected), but be careful in the

mountains to try to plant Chandler by mid-Sept (next week); northern piedmont by 3rd week in Sept (just 2 weeks left); lower piedmont by last week in Sept (just 3 weeks left); Sandhills usually plant 1st week in October, but some growers set at end of Sept (not really recommended); Eastern NC northeastern areas 1st week of October, but some growers plant sooner in this region; Eastern NC central areas usually do well with mid-Oct; and southeastern areas in 3rd and 4th weeks of October.

Plant types - several types are available and NC Strawberry Association keeps an up-to-date supplier list <http://www.ncstrawberry.com/>

Plug popular in piedmont and mountains - most expensive plant type but has important advantages for ease of transplanting, availability in early Sept, and minimal water for establishment relative to bare-root fresh dug

Bare-root fresh dug popular in Eastern NC and Sandhills, available starting in 3rd week Sept, but not many being dug & shipped until the 4th week Sept and 1st week Oct

Cut-off only experience with these is in southeastern CP counties; not available until mid-Oct

Plant type and water requirements: as we learned in the Labor Day advisory, strawberry plant types vary tremendously in water requirements (fresh dug bareroot need 174,000 gal/A; plugs need 21,000 gal; and cut-offs probably only about 10,000 gal). One acre inch of water equals 27,152 gallons. Thus, a fresh dug planting will need about 6.4 acre inches! If you have ordered fresh dug, and will not likely have this quantity of water available, the DEADLINE for trying to switch into plugs may have already passed, but it may not hurt to call your supplier anyway.

Tracking Tropical Storm Activity?

I have located an interesting website for tracking tropical storm activity www.wunderground.com, and it may be worth your time to look at the North Atlantic storm systems and especially **Invest 99**, This area of disturbed weather has the potential for tropical development. This website produced a tracking map at 8am Wed Sep 5 that you should check out:

http://www.wunderground.com/tropical/tracking/at200799_model.html#a_topad . This shows some possible storm tracks that would impact our region (i.e. bring rain).

The computer maps show no real possibility of Felix bringing any rain our way.

I have just checked AccuWeathers AccuPop for rainfall in next 96 hrs and there is virtually no prospect for rain; and looking further out, there is a real possibility that we will not experience any rain for the next 15 days in this area, and I am afraid most areas of the state!

Keep those questions coming! Sept. 6 we are rooting plugs in early AM and then will be on the road rest of week; cell phone is best way to reach me (919-418-9687); also email at night (barclay_poling@ncsu.edu).

Barclay Poling, Extension Specialist and Professor (Small Fruits)
Dept. of Horticultural Science
Box 7609
252 Kilgore Hall
NC State University
Raleigh, NC 27695-7609
919-515-1195 office
919-418-9687 cell
919-515-2505 fax