

STRAWBERRY PICKING TIPS:

*Soft, sweet fruits like strawberries are highly perishable even when still on the plant. In a rainy year, it can be almost impossible to keep ahead of the mold (even with chemical sprays, which Kestrel Perch does NOT use). So what's the most effective organic way to minimize the "yuck" factor and maximize edible fruit? With "good field hygiene" – aka **careful, thorough picking** on the part of everyone who picks – we can get in at least an extra week of good picking! **So do the next picker a favor (that might even be you!) by leaving your section of row nice and clean. Here's how:***

1) Each strawberry "bed" generally has 2 "rows" of plants, each with a flag in it.

- PICK ALONG ONE "ROW" (that's half the "bed," from the edge to the middle); someone else will pick the other side.
- START AT A FLAG, taking it with you (put it in your junk berry container; see below), and pick moving away from the entrance area.
- WHEN YOU STOP, STICK YOUR FLAG BACK IN THE GROUND to indicate where the next picker should start.
- Feel free to jump from row to row to sample all the varieties – just make sure to start at a flag each time and stick your flag back in where you stop.

2) PICK ALL RIPE BERRIES, even little and oddly shaped ones – if everybody leaves those behind, they'll eventually go moldy and infect the bigger fruit.

- LEAVE UNDERRIPE BERRIES (ones with light tips or undersides) to continue ripening.

3) PLEASE PICK and KEEP "SHORTCAKE" or "JAM" BERRIES (ones with clean damage that can be cut out) as part of your quota. Unsprayed fruit simply isn't all going to be perfect!

- Or if you absolutely have to have only perfect fruits and can't sort later, please reduce your take accordingly (amounts may be posted).
- Pickers have been known to discard berries that others fish out of the compost buckets as perfectly edible – eewww!

4) TAKE A JUNK JUG (on the fence) with you.

- As you pick, COLLECT ALL MOLDY, SQUISHY, OR OTHERWISE TRULY POST-EDIBLE BERRIES for composting. Getting them out of the field promptly really limits the spread of mold in wet weather and *makes for much more pleasant picking next time.*

5) Pick each fruit INDIVIDUALLY AND CAREFULLY – if a major stem gets kinked, the remaining berries on it don't ripen properly.

6) WEEDING AS YOU GO IS GREATLY APPRECIATED! When it comes to dandelions, though, just break them off – trying to dig them up causes more damage to strawberry plants than it's worth.