



### Pickings from the Patch

If you drove by the strawberry patch anytime in the past couple weeks, you might have wondered what I was doing! Renovation is the word of the week.

After intense picking for a month, the patch needs to be rejuvenated for the next year. I start by mowing them off with my brush hog. After mowing, we have a brief window where we can apply some materials to help control the weeds and also fertilizer. This hopefully keeps the weeds in check and will give the new growth of strawberry plants some needed energy.

Next, we remove the center tines of my rototiller and narrow the rows back to about 10 inches. If we didn't do this step, the strawberry patch would be one massive mess with no rows and would make picking no fun.

Also during this busy time, we have to bale the straw from the newly harvested wheat field. The straw will be applied in November and will cover and protect the plants over the winter months.

As you can see when you drive by, the plants are "lookin' good" for another year!

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### Life on the Ledge

One of my daily tasks is filling flats with empty quart containers so they are ready to be filled the following morning with strawberries. It is one of those easy jobs that give you time to think as you work. Lately, I have used the time to thank God for the bountiful harvest of beautiful strawberries.

I am overwhelmed when I think how much I have learned on this strawberry journey from the first plants until now.

My first strawberry plants were given me by none other than Kerry! I wasn't even dating Alan at the time, although I had my eye on him. He was the handsome guy at church that sat a few pews back. One day during fellowship hour, I asked Kerry for her advice on what variety of June strawberries to plant. To my delight, she not only told me some varieties, but said she had some left from that year's planting, which I could have! For any of you gardeners, free plants, recommended by another grower are like gold, so I took the plants home and planted them in my garden.

The next year, I picked quarts of strawberries and enjoyed sharing them with my extended family. If memory serves me correctly, by the second year, my then boyfriend, Alan, helped me pick strawberries on my birthday! I didn't irrigate and those first crops produced an abundance... of very small berries.

The following year, I planted my first everbearing strawberries based on a Cornell Cooperative Extension publication that I had read. And the journey continued. From irrigation to fertilization, from protection from birds and deer to marketing, I have learned a lot.

I am grateful for the abundance, for a love of farming instilled in me by my family, for excellent teachers and mentors, and for all of our customers.

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Farm Girl Field Notes is a bi-weekly (or as often as we have time...the farming season is very busy!!) newsletter from Panek's Pickin' Patch, Ledge Rock Farms, & Flower Fields Forever (in the farmers' market edition). You will learn a little about our farms and what is happening each week.