



Champion COMMUNITY Page

✓ Strawberry season just around the corner

Pick-your-own berries should be ready this weekend

By **RICHARD VIVIAN**

The Champion

Local strawberry producers are busy preparing for the rush to the fields as the season draws near. Patches throughout the Milton area are expected to be ready in mid-June.

"The pace around the farm really picks up as soon as strawberry season hits. It's one of our two busiest times of the year — the other being October with the pumpkins," said Bert Andrews of Andrews Scenic Acres.

"We have a few ripe berries now, but not many. It'll all depend on the weather (as to when the rest ripen)."

Though the mid-June opening prediction is fairly standard for the savoured berries, Laura Hughes of Springridge Farm said the long winter has slowed things down a bit.

"Sometimes it's a little earlier and sometimes it's a little later (than mid-June). This year it's a little later than usual," she said.

"If we get some nice, warm sun like we had (Wednesday) and (Thursday) it won't be too long (before they're ready for picking)."

Even with the long winter, this year's crops are looking to be top of the line, agree the two area producers. Both the quantity and quality of the favoured fruit have given farmers reason for optimism.

"It looks like a lovely crop. They're sizing up nicely with the rain. We didn't have any trouble with frost this year and there was enough sun for the bees to pollinate them," said Ms Hughes.

Picking strawberries is a popular event at area farms as people welcome the summer with a stroll through the berry patch. The experience offers families an opportunity to teach children about the growing process and get a little fresh air while they stock up on the jamming favourite.

But increasingly, people don't have the time to spend in the field, opting instead to snatch up a basket of pre-picked berries, Mr. Andrews said.

"When members of the family are all working, they might prefer to just buy them already picked. On the other hand, we also have a lot of people come out for the farm experience of picking strawberries. We sell a lot both ways," he said.

While most berries are still a little green, Springridge Farm has a select few that are ready for enjoyment. The farm grows a half acre of berries with the assistance of a black biodegradable plastic used to heat the ground, creating a greenhouse-type affect.

"The sun on the black (plastic) heats the soil and the plants come out earlier. We've just done a small area that way so that we would have a few berries to pick early," Ms Hughes said. "John (her husband and farm grower) is doing a bit of an experiment with them and it's been quite successful."

The strawberry patch at Andrews Scenic Acres is expected to open June 15. The farm is already open with several other attractions. Springridge Farm anticipates a June 16 opening for the strawberry season.



As pick-your-own strawberry season approaches, Milton's Springridge Farm on Bell School Line prepares for another year. Here (above) a wagon load of visitors makes its way back to the parking lot area while employee Erinn Walsh picks some of the early strawberries out in the field. Those looking to pick their own berries should be able to do so as early as this weekend. Strawberry season, always a big hit among local residents young and old, runs until about mid-July.

Photos by
GRAHAM PAINE

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COGECO 14 Programming Schedule — June 12th - June 18th 2001.

Tuesday, June 12th	
9am, 10am, 11am, Noon	Plugged In! Encore
5pm, 6pm & 7:30pm	Plugged In! Seniors Showcase
5:30pm	
6:30pm	Optimist TV Bingo
8:00pm	Juno Beach to Caen, Part 1

Wednesday, June 13th	
9am, 10am, 11am, Noon	Plugged In! Encore
5pm, 6pm & 7:30pm	Plugged In! Quick & Easy Ways to Healthy Eating
5:30pm	
6:30pm	Swap Talk
8:00pm	Juno Beach to Caen, Part 2

Thursday, June 14th	
9am, 10am, 11am, Noon	Plugged In! Encore
5pm, 6pm & 7:30pm	Plugged In! The Issue Is... Money Week
5:30pm	
6:30pm	Osler Health Connection
7:00pm	
8:00pm	Halton Regional Council - June 13th

Sunday, June 17th	
9am, 10am, 11am, Noon	Plugged In! Encore
5pm, 6pm & 7:30pm	Plugged In! Week in Review
5:30pm	
6:30pm	The Issue Is... Seniors Showcase
7:00pm	Osler Health Connection

Monday, June 18th	
9am, 10am, 11am, Noon	Plugged In! Encore
5pm & 6pm	Plugged In! Living on the Edge
5:30pm	
6:30pm	Money Week
7:00pm	The Issue Is... Quick & Easy Ways to Healthy Eating
7:30pm	
8:00pm	SportsZONE Live

Feature this week: The Season Finale of "TV Bingo & Swap Talk" - Tuesday & Wednesday, 6:30 pm.