

Erinn Walsh picks strawberries at Springridge Farm, where — along with Andrews' Scenic Acres — the berries are finally ready.

File photo by GRAHAM PAINE

## Strawberries finally ripe — and ready

By FANNIE SUNSHINE

The Champion

Local strawberry farmers are getting ready for what promises to be a busy weekend, as the luscious fruit is ripe and ready for picking.

"This year we're starting strawberry season a little late," said Laura Hughes, co-owner of Springridge Farm on Bell School Line.

"Usually it starts between June 10 and 15 but because of the cool spring we had to start late."

Between strawberry and raspberry picking, the former is by far the more popular of the two, she continued.

"People find strawberries are easier to pick and they can fill their basket up faster because the berry is larger."

Ms Hughes said she's expecting hundreds of pickers to wander their way through the 15 acres of strawberries over the next three weeks.

"Some will use the berries to make jam, a lot will freeze them, some will eat them fresh or make daiquiris.

"You can freeze strawberries all year. They are great to go on cereal or to eat as snacks because they are full of fiber and Vitamin C."

Earlier this week, Ms Hughes was busy setting up scales and preserving supplies in anticipation of the busy weekend.

"We're anxious to get going."

Visitors can pick up recipes outlining ways to use the juicy berry in everyday cooking. "We have recipes for strawberry custard pie and this year we have a new recipe for strawberry cobbler. Nothing compares to the flavour of Ontario strawberries," he said.

Although Andrews' Scenic Acres owner Bert Andrews said he's looking forward to the start of the season, his No. 10 Sideroad farm's entire 35 acres of strawberries won't be ready for picking this weekend.

"There was a lot of frost damage over the past few weeks. We had a hot spell in May and then it went cool again and that really damaged the crops. Our crops are down quite a bit but we still have enough for picking."

Along with fresh strawberries, Andrews' Scenic Acres also sells strawberry wine, strawberry lemonade, strawberry-rhubarb pie and strawberry yogurt and ice cream.

# Plenty of horticultural ideas to be found during garden tour Sunday

Miltonians will be able to pick up new gardening ideas during the Milton Horticultural Society's garden tour Sunday.

"Some years we've had a competition instead of a tour but for the past two or three years we've done the tour," said Kay Bounsall, president of the horticultural society. "We try to get new homes as part of the tour each year."

When people purchase tickets they will receive a map of the 10 homes featured on the tour, she continued.

"You follow the route on your own. Some people won't go to every home because they are looking for something particular. A description of the gardens accompany the map."

The homeowners will give the tour of their front and backyard gardens, Ms Bounsall said, adding the tour will take place between noon and 5 p.m.

"It's (tour) kind of neat. People ask what plant is good for what and where it was bought. People are always looking for new ideas and what others have."

Last year about 70 people bought tickets for the tour, she said, adding the tour will take place rain or shine.

"We hope people in the new subdivision will come out. The tour is a lot of fun. There are some really wonderful ideas out there, not just for flowers, but for structures and water features."

Tickets for the tour cost \$7 per person or \$10 per couple and can be purchased from Joleen's on Main Street or by calling (905) 878-6904, (905) 878-4460 or (905) 878-5244.

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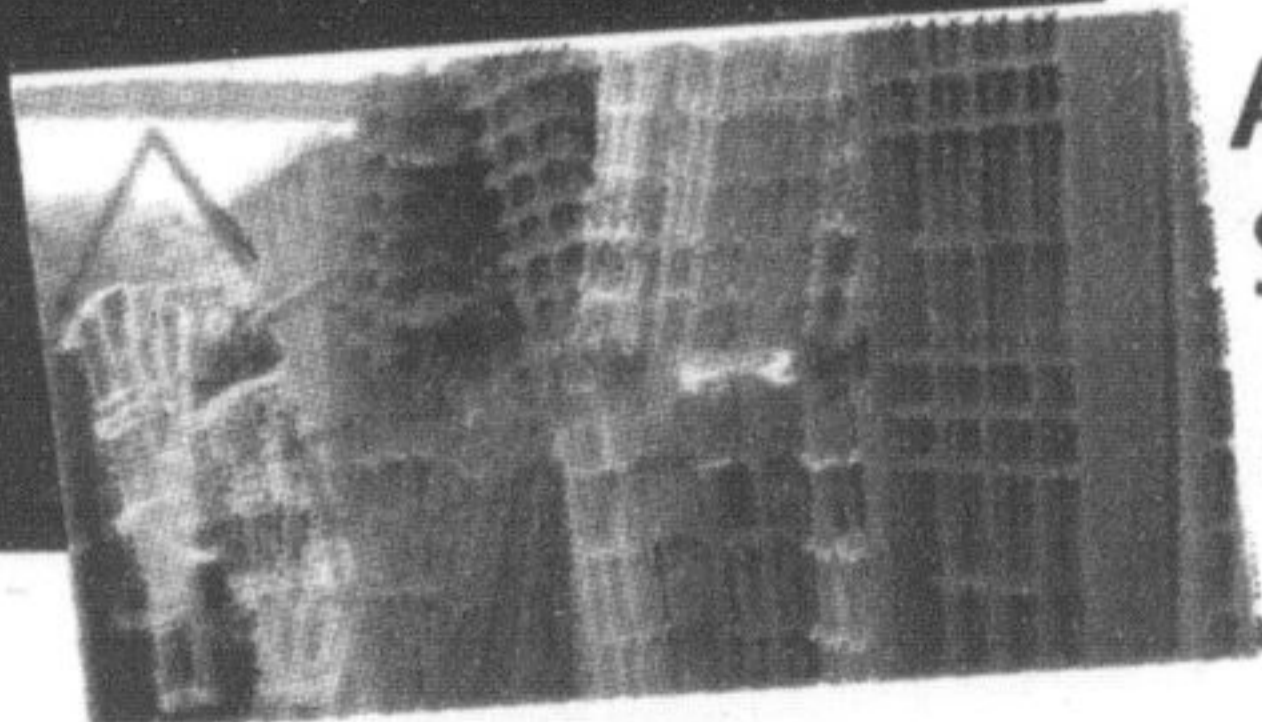
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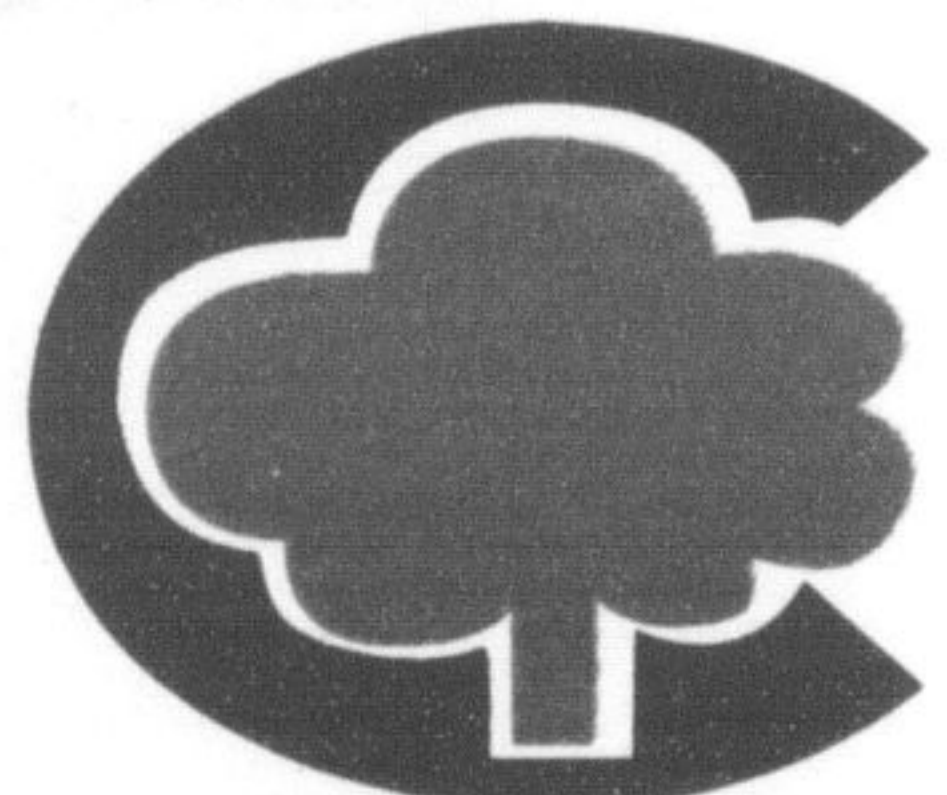


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