



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CONTACT

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TENNESSEE STRAWBERRIES PREPARE TO TAKE COVER

NASHVILLE— Tennessee’s much anticipated strawberry crop will be ready for picking in the next two or three weeks. However, between now and harvest, if current forecasts hold, those berries may have to “take cover” several times to avoid frost damage.

Tennessee weather is predictably unpredictable. It may be spring, but Tennessee typically experiences a few more winter-like periods—called blackberry winter and dogwood winter—before the average late April last-freeze date has passed.

Predicted cold snaps are appropriate for the time of year, and the state’s strawberry farmers are well prepared to keep the coveted crop in fine shape. Many of the state’s early ripening berries, available in mid-April, are sheltered continuously under protective hoop houses. Open fields of strawberries are blanketed with row covers when temperatures plummet.

The freeze that local farmers dread is a sudden hard freeze during the last two weeks of April. It’s considered a hard freeze when temperatures dip significantly below freezing or stay at just-freezing for a number of hours. A hard freeze can chill plants to the point that blooms or tender fruits are damaged.

Tennessee strawberries grown without frost protection generally ripen first in West Tennessee in mid-April. Middle Tennessee sees its first red field-grown berries by the first week of May, and parts of East Tennessee won’t hit the peak of their strawberry season until the first part of June.

Hilly terrain, streaked with creeks and river bottoms, creates pockets of extra moisture with cooler temperatures, so it’s always wise to call ahead before making the trip to a strawberry patch. Just because one farmer escaped frost damage is not necessarily an indicator that all other local growers were equally lucky.

Find farmers with strawberry patches nearby, farmers markets with local strawberries, and strawberry recipes with the free Pick Tennessee mobile app or online at www.PickTNProducts.org.

-More-

Upcoming Pick Tennessee "Strawberry School" Media Days are scheduled in two Tennessee locations:

Tuesday, April 26

9 a.m. - 11 a.m. EDT

Mountain Meadows Farm

Shannon Meadows

248 Bridges Road, Heiskell, TN 37754 (Anderson County)

Phone: (865) 494-9709

E-mail: mountainmeadowsfarm@gmail.com

Web: <http://www.mountainmeadowsfarmtn.com>

Thursday, April 28

9 a.m. - 11 a.m. CDT

Kelley's Berry Farm

Jon Kelley & Patrick Kelley

50 Riverview Estates Lane, Castalian Springs, TN 37031 (Trousdale County)

Phone: (615) 633-7447 or (615) 633-1426

Web: <http://www.kelleysberries.com>

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