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Planting Practices and Florida Fortuna

Florida Fortuna has proven to be a problematic variety to grow with success rates varying across the industry. Ever since the first *Florida Fortuna* plantings began in the Queensland industry, in 2009, the variety has proven to be both challenging and popular amongst growers.

Many growers have experienced both success and failure with the variety on more than one occasion, often with unexplainable reasons. *Florida Fortuna* continues to surprise with its ability to produce large, quality fruit, despite being a weaker type of plant. As a nursery plant, *Florida Fortuna* is also a challenge, requiring more care and inputs than other commercial lines.

2015 *Florida Fortuna* treatment trials conducted at the Red Jewel Research Farm showed some interesting results regarding the use of certain products and the affect that cold store time can have on the establishment of the runners. As a result, Red Jewel will be applying a stress protection product, to the runners prior to harvest. This is to give the plants the best possible protection from the stress caused by harvest and transplant. This product is reported to stay active within the plant for a total of 21 days in order to aid in the early stages of establishment, and works in conjunction with the usual planting practices including the use of fungicides and irrigation.

The most important considerations when growing *Florida Fortuna* are site selection, soil type and good ground preparation. In more recent years, observations of *Florida Fortuna* on commercial farms have shown that the most successful plantings are on well-draining, sandy soils. Due to the variety's disease susceptibility, fumigation of planting beds and early treatment of runners with registered fungicides is also recommended. Extra attention and care at time of plant establishment are required with *Florida Fortuna* and will be rewarded at harvest time.

Florida Fortuna has the ability to give growers great results, but can also prove very challenging at the same time. While there is potentially significant reward to be gained from growing *Florida Fortuna*, growers must balance this against the risk of losing a percentage of their plants during the course of the season to soil borne pathogens. It is not uncommon for growers planting *Florida Fortuna* in other growing regions around the world to experience plant losses of 15 to 20 % over the course of the season. For this reason, limiting risk by planting other varieties in conjunction with *Florida Fortuna* should be considered.

This season, some growers have requested early deliveries of *Florida Fortuna*. Whilst we aim to do our best to deliver a quality plant to growers on time, this particular variety can suffer from losses due to immaturity. Please refer to the back page of your order form for the full extent of information regarding this.

In order to be able to track any issues that may arise in the fruiting fields post planting, Red Jewel Nursery asks that all growers keep detailed records on their runners planted. Each box of runners will be labelled with a batch number. Please keep this information in relation to where and when runners are planted, so that should we need to assess any issues, we are able to use the Batch Code to identify where and when the runners were harvested.

Red Jewel Nursery wishes all growers the very best for the upcoming planting and following production season. Please contact our local Grower Liaison Officer, Elise Pike, with any queries, concerns or issues as soon as they arise.