

How to get the best results when establishing strawberry transplants.

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Introduction

Each year I am asked by fruit growers to provide opinion on why runners have not established well. The runner grower is usually somewhere near the top of the blame list but often fruit grower management practices have contributed to the problem. In this talk I want to present a summary of my thoughts and experiences and give recommendations that I believe will maximise the establishment of the tender young plants that the runner grower has entrusted to your care.

Pre-planting

Maximise pre-plant weed control before laying the plastic:

- **Do not spray herbicides over plastic before planting.**
- Avoid spraying weeds in the inter-row. If you have to spray use a properly hooded low pressure sprayer or wick

Soil condition: Soils with lots of lots of organic matter and lumpy clods, will be difficult to wet up properly and will not allow a good fumigation job or provide a supportive environment for either plugs or bare root transplants.

Fumigation: Telone C35 has a six week plant back period, Metham requires a three week period between fumigation and planting. Lettuce seed germination tests are helpful. Plant establishment will be affected if residues of a fumigant remain in the soil at planting.

*Runner purchase and quality assessment **BEFORE PLANTING***

- Buy runners only from accredited suppliers.
- Assess the quality of runners before staff are waiting impatiently to get started.
- If the quality is unacceptable, or the plants and roots are too dry, advise the supplier and discuss the options. A quality controller would be useful.
- If you've ordered "LEAF ON" plants check how many plants have at least 3 functional leaves. Do a count of 30-50 plants in a good number of boxes through the consignment. Advise the runner grower if you are not happy.

Planting

- a. Ensure that the soil is thoroughly wet up before planting.
- b. Ensure that leaves and roots are kept moist for both bare root and plug plants.
- c. Avoid laying plants on plastic.

This results in:

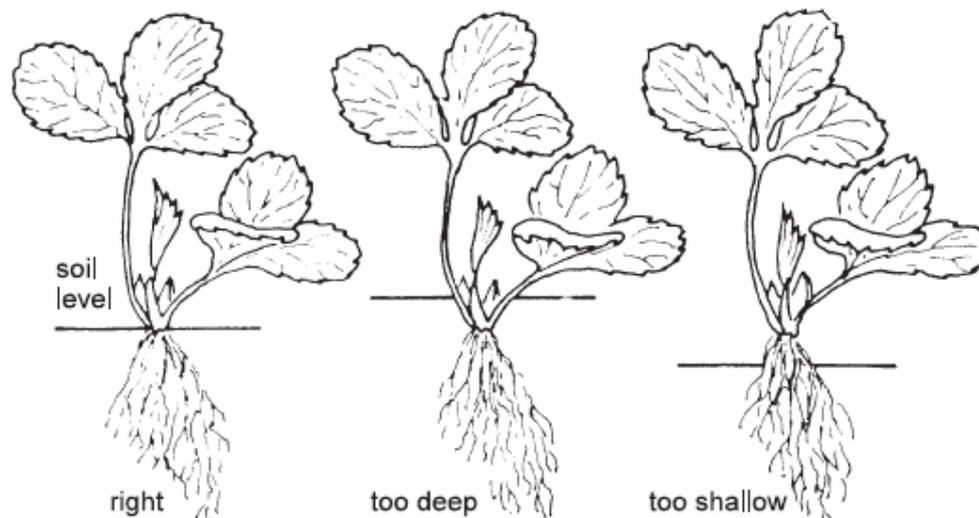
- the roots drying out. Leaf and root tissues are scalded on hot plastic.
- the uptake of herbicides by the wet leaves and roots.

- d. Keep plants wet by immersing in a bucket of water on the planting trolley. Alternatively wrap plants in wet potato sacks to prevent drying out.
- e. Consider planting from late afternoon through the night to minimise drying out and damage from hot plastic.
- f. Planting depth – crown: The diagram below gives a clear view of correct planting depth. Planting too deep is lethal. Plants with a long crown will need to be planted deeper.
- g. Planting depth – roots: The planting trowel (spatula, file etc) should be placed as close to the end of the root mass as possible.
- h. Fertiliser. When using second year plastic do you have a plan for fertiliser placement and planting position to avoid fertiliser damage.

Post plant watering

Once plants have been watered in, the primary purpose for all that watering during establishment is to keep the leaves and plastic cool. Leaf OFF plants also need to be watered to help in establishment especially on hot days. A system of micro sprinklers is ideal for water conservation and misting, rather than flooding the plants using solid set irrigation. It is also a simple matter to have the irrigation set, eg ON for three minutes, OFF for six minutes.

Acknowledgement: Jane and Bryan Stothart were very obliging in giving me a copy of their instructions for planters and crew leaders. I have selected a few key points from their procedure. Their procedure is more thorough than what I have presented in this presentation.



Red Jewel Sponsored Field Day 9 March 2007 at W & A Sharpe farm, Wamuran



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