

Renovation of Strawberries after Harvest



Renovation is the management process of regenerating June-bearing strawberry planting after harvest in order to keep the planting for an additional cropping year. This typically involves applying a fertilizer, applying pre- or post-emergent herbicides, rototilling between rows to narrow them, mowing off old-growth leaves and irrigating.

Renovation is most successful if the plants are vigorous. Renovation is not used on plantings in the establishment year or on day neutrals. Once the last picking is over, fields of June-bearing plants should be renovated immediately to attain maximum regrowth in the late summer and short fall season. Delaying renovation by even a week may well mean a greatly reduced crop the following year.

One advantage of mowing is the development of a younger, more efficient leaf canopy. This rejuvenated canopy is more effective for “recharging” the plant energy systems for fruit bud formation and food reserve buildup for over-wintering. Mowing also offers disease and insect control benefits, especially if the old leaves are removed from the row.

Strawberry plants tend to enter a stage of low activity toward the end of harvest. Renovation stimulates renewed growth and eliminates weaker, older leaves, which compete for fertilizer, moisture and light.

However, producers have sometimes observed negative effects from mowing. This can be caused by an unusually long harvest period, which leaves less time for the development of a new, full-foliage canopy, or by mowing too close to the crowns, especially during abnormally hot weather.

If extremely hot weather conditions, with temperatures above 30 C, are forecast in the seven to 10 days following renovation mowing, special care should be taken to avoid mowing too close to the crown. If the crown is fully exposed during extremely hot weather, it may cause heat stress and hinder regrowth of the plant. If the canopy is quite thin or plants are not vigorous (there are limited leaves over the crowns), you may consider skipping a renovation mow completely. With the less dense leaf canopy over the crown, there should still be sufficient light reaching the crown, which will, combined with sufficient irrigation, promote growth of new leaves.

Suggested June-Bearing Strawberry Renovation Steps

1. After the last picking, apply nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium based on soil test recommendations.
2. Mow the tops of the plants to remove old leaves without cutting the new expanding growth. This usually occurs at a height of 2.5 to five centimetres above the crowns.
3. Narrow the rows using a rotovator or between-row cultivator on either side of the row, then rake to move unrooted and weakly-rooted plants into the aisle. This practice prevents plants from encroaching on the aisleway. Plants with mature crowns should be spaced 15 to 23 centimetres apart in the matted row.
4. Avoid applying recommended herbicides at renovation as an overall or banded spray, as they can slow down the regeneration of the strawberry plant. Some hand weeding or herbicide spot treatment may be preferred to minimize plant stress. A post-emergent herbicide, such as Lontrel, can be applied seven to 10 days before mowing.
5. Irrigate thoroughly and repeat as necessary to maintain sufficient moisture for vigorous growth.
6. Consider spraying a fungicide for leaf diseases if regrowth starts to show symptoms.

Reference: Commercial Strawberry Production on the Prairies. MB Ag, SK Ag, AB Ag Collaboration, this guide is available via [Province of Manitoba | agriculture - Guides and Publications \(gov.mb.ca\)](http://www.gov.mb.ca/agriculture/guides-and-publications/)

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