

# STRAWBERRY RENOVATION

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**M**atted row strawberry plantings benefit from a process called 'renovation' after harvest to stimulate new growth to support next year's crop and to interrupt the build-up of certain pests and diseases mid-way through the growing season. For best results, renovation should be started immediately after the harvest is completed to knock down two-spotted mites, sap beetles, and/or root weevils and to promote early runner formation. Early runner-set translates to higher yield potential the following year. Build-up of leaf spots and other foliar pathogens can be cleaned up with this process, too. Renovation should be completed by late-July in normal years. The following steps describe renovation of commercial strawberry fields. Specific rates and timing of applications can be found in the



**1. Begin weed control.** Annual broadleaf weeds can be controlled with the 2,4-D amine formulation (Amine® 4 or Formula 40) applied immediately after final harvest. Be extremely careful to avoid drift when applying 2,4-D. Some strawberry damage is also possible if misapplied. Read and understand the label completely. If grasses are a problem, sethoxydim (Poast) will control annual and some perennial grasses. However, do not tank mix Poast and 2,4-D.

**2. Mow the old leaves off.** Mow just above the crowns **3-5 days after herbicide application.** Be careful not to damage crown by mowing too low.

**3. Fertilize the planting.** The main goal is to deliver nitrogen at this time to help re-grow the canopy. Nitrogen should be applied at 25-60 lbs/acre, depending on vigor and basic soil fertility. Split applications (one now and the rest in 4-6 weeks) are better than a single fertilizer application. This gives plants more time to take

up the nutrients in the fertilizer. A leaf tissue analysis (recommended once the canopy has regrown) is the best way to fine-tune your fertilizer program. This will tell you what the plants are actually able to take out of the soil and what nutrients are in sufficient supply or not. See [Leaf Tissue Test Sampling Instructions](#) for more on this.

**4. Subsoil.** Where tractor and picker traffic has been heavy on wet soils, compaction may be severe. Subsoiling between rows will help break up compacted layers and provide better infiltration of water. Subsoiling may be done later in the sequence if necessary.

**5. Narrow rows and cultivate between rows.** Reduce the width of rows to 12-18 inches at the base. More berries are produced along row edges than in row middles. Wider rows lead to lower fruit production (yield and quality) and increased disease pressure. Narrow rows also give better sunlight penetration, air circulation, spray coverage, and over-all fruit quality. Use a rototiller, multivator, or cultivator to achieve the row narrowing. Work in the straw between the rows at this time, too. If possible, try to throw 1-inch of soil on top of the rows at this time to stimulate new root formation on established crowns and new runners.

**7. Post-renovation weed control.** Preemergence weed control should begin immediately after the plants are mowed and the soil is tilled to narrow the crop row. The most common practice at this time is to apply half the annual rate of terbacil (Sinbar at 4 oz/acre). It is essential that the

strawberry plants be mowed, even if 2,4-D was not applied, to avoid injury from Sinbar. If regrowth of the strawberry plants has started, significant damage may result. Some varieties are more sensitive to 3 Sinbar than others. If unsure, make a test application to a small area before treating the entire planting. Sinbar should not be used on soils with less than 0.5% organic matter or on reportedly sensitive varieties such as Guardian, Darrow, Tribute, Tristar, and possibly Honeoye. Injury is usually the result of too high a rate or overlapping of the spray pattern. If Sinbar is not used, napropamide (Devrinol at 4 lb/acre) or DCPA (Dacthal at 8- 12 lb/acre) should be applied at this time. Dacthal is preferred over Devrinol if the planting is weak. If Sinbar is used, napropamide (Devrinol at 4 lb/acre) should be applied 4 to 6 weeks later. This later application of Devrinol will control most winter annual weeds that begin to germinate in late August or early September. Devrinol should be applied prior to rainfall or it must be irrigated into the soil. During the summer, Poast can be used to control emerged grasses.

Cultivation is also common during the summer months. Cultivations should be shallow and timely (weeds should be small) to avoid root damage to the strawberry planting. The growth of strawberry daughter plants will also limit the amount of cultivation possible especially near the crop row.

**8. Irrigate.** Water is needed for both activation of herbicides and for plant growth. Don't let the plants go into stress. The planting should receive 1 to 1-1/2 inches of water per week from either rain or irrigation.

**9. Cultivate to sweep runners into the row** until plant stand is sufficient. Thereafter, or in any case after September, any runner plant not yet rooted is not likely to produce fruit next year, is essentially a weed, and should be removed. Coulter wheels and/or cultivators will help remove these excess plants in the aisles.

**10. Adequate moisture and fertility** during August and September will increase fruit bud formation and improve fruit yield for the coming year. Continue irrigation through this period and fertilize if necessary. An additional 20- 30 pounds of N per acre is suggested, depending on the vigor.

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