There are two types of strawberry grown in this country – the June bearer and the ever bearer.

**The June Bearer**
- Planted in April, flowers in May and harvested 60 days after planting, in June.
- At the end of the season they are dug up when dormant and frozen at -2°C, to be replanted next year.

**The Ever Bearer**
- Planted in March every week for 3 weeks.
- Continuously throws out flowers.
- Crops and is ready for harvesting in June, July and August.
- These plants are pulled out and killed off at the end of the season.

Nursery stocks come from the US, Italy, Holland and some from the UK.

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**Why use poly tunnels?**
Poly tunnels provide the optimum conditions for strawberry growing – this means a larger crop and the plants can fight disease.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Protect the plant</th>
<th>To encourage crops to come earlier</th>
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<td>Why?</td>
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<td>Rain spreads disease and rots plant, damaging the soft skin of the strawberry.</td>
<td>To protect the plant against frost. Also it extends the heat hours the crop receives</td>
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<td>Advantage: Less pesticides and chemicals needed.</td>
<td>Advantage: Extends British growing season. reducing the need for imports out of season.</td>
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The Strawberry Season

January  Mid January the season for strawberries under glass finishes.

February  Mid February season for strawberries under glass starts in heated poly tunnels.

March  Planting of ever berry every week, for next 3 weeks.
      The strawberry beds are prepared and poly tunnels erected for June bearing berries.
Trickle irrigation is installed prior to plastic being overlaid. This is to allow water to get directly to the roots of the strawberry plant, which reduces needless water loss.

A sprinkler is used for watering new crops for 10-14 days to stop the leaves drying out. Afterwards, the trickle system is used. Through this, the water pH and electric conductivity is monitored and the nutrients carefully balanced. The water comes from rivers, reservoirs, bore holes and mains.

It is too expensive to waste water - that which is not used, is cleaned and reused.
Black plastic laid over the trickle irrigation system.

A tractor laying fleece to prevent weeds growing and to insulate the soil.

White fleece is used to warm the soil ready for the strawberries to be planted in April.
April

Bring out the June plants (Elsanta) from the freezer and plant them around mid April, every week in succession. Holes are made in the black plastic and the young plants inserted.

The tunnels go up from flower initiation but if the flowers appear early, the tunnels will protect from rain and frost.

Strawberries picked under glass from now.

The conditions can be controlled by varying the use of poly tunnel and fleece.
May
Young plants develop.

Plastic sides of tunnel lowered.

Plastic raised for ventilation to control temperature.

Wood shavings or similar for ????

Strawberry plants.

Flowers developing on plants.
June –August
Picking takes place.

July
When ever bearers finish cropping, the plants are killed and new plants planted in the same holes. Is this July or later?

August
New strawberries are planted under glass for picking in 60 days time.

The Fruit Pickers Day
Starts at 3:30 a.m. or day break and continues until it is too hot to pick the fruit, as it will easily get damaged. The working day finishes by 4:30 p.m. at the latest, although it is usually much earlier than this. If it is not hot and sunny, the picking can begin and end later. Workers must have 11 hours a day clear from work and work a maximum of 39 hours a week.

Plastic trays are taken to the field. There are 6 or 8 plastic punnets to a tray.

The punnets hold 250 or 500g of strawberries.

Although there is some change towards recyclable packaging, punnets cannot be made of biodegradable materials as they deteriorate in the sun’s heat.
The Packing House

The pack house is working 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at the height of production.

The pack house is chilled to keep the strawberries in perfect condition. Quality control takes place here, the weight is checked and the lids are placed on.
The strawberries are ready to be transported by refrigerated lorry to the supermarket. The supermarkets have clear guidelines about standard and quality, so the growers will leave poorer quality strawberries on the plant, as it is too expensive to pick and pack them. Wholesale markets are not reliable outlets for large strawberry producers.

The UK market is growing at about 20% a year and has been for 10 years.

**September – October**

**November**

Frost finishes the season.

**December**

June bearing plants dug up and frozen at -2°C
Fascinating Facts!

Japan is one of the largest strawberry producers in the world. Many families will own a tunnel – they are often given as gifts.

America is the world’s largest strawberry producer, followed by China and Spain.

Spain produces approx. 300 000 tons of strawberries a year.
UK produces approx. 48-50 000 tons of strawberries a year.

In the summer, soft fruit represents about 1% of supermarket turnover and is the second largest in monetary value, of all produce lines.

S&A Produce grow 25% of the strawberries produced in the UK based primarily in Kent and Herefordshire. They sell strawberries to the supermarkets at £14 per kilo. They employ roughly 4000 seasonal workers – and some who are full time only returning home for Christmas.