

# Economic Feasibility and Consumer Acceptance of Strawberries as an Additional Offering in Fall Mum Sales

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## Introduction

As consumers become more health conscious and concerned with food production practices, increased market demand had developed for edible plants with ornamental properties. This action research examined the economic feasibility, production realities, and consumer acceptance of offering garden and alpine strawberries at fall mum sales.

Each year \$173 million in mums are sold in the United States. By offering potted strawberries for sale alongside mums, Kentucky producers may be able to mitigate their risk as well as generate additional on-farm revenue from a proven consumer base and market.



## About the Strawberry Plants

Alpine strawberry plants are smaller than classic garden strawberries and have smaller, sweeter fruit. The plants are hardy perennials in USDA zones 5 through 8 and are generally bunching and non-running. Berries will not ripen off the plant and therefore have limited commercial viability. Alpine strawberries for this research were started from seed sourced from three different retailers.

Albion strawberries are day-neutral, traditional garden strawberries with very large fruits. Albion have a sweeter flavor than many commercial varieties due to their high sugar content. This variety tolerates heat and humidity very well. They are also resistant to verticillium and phytophthora crown rot, and offer partial resistance to anthracnose crown rot. Albion strawberries for this research were started from crowns.

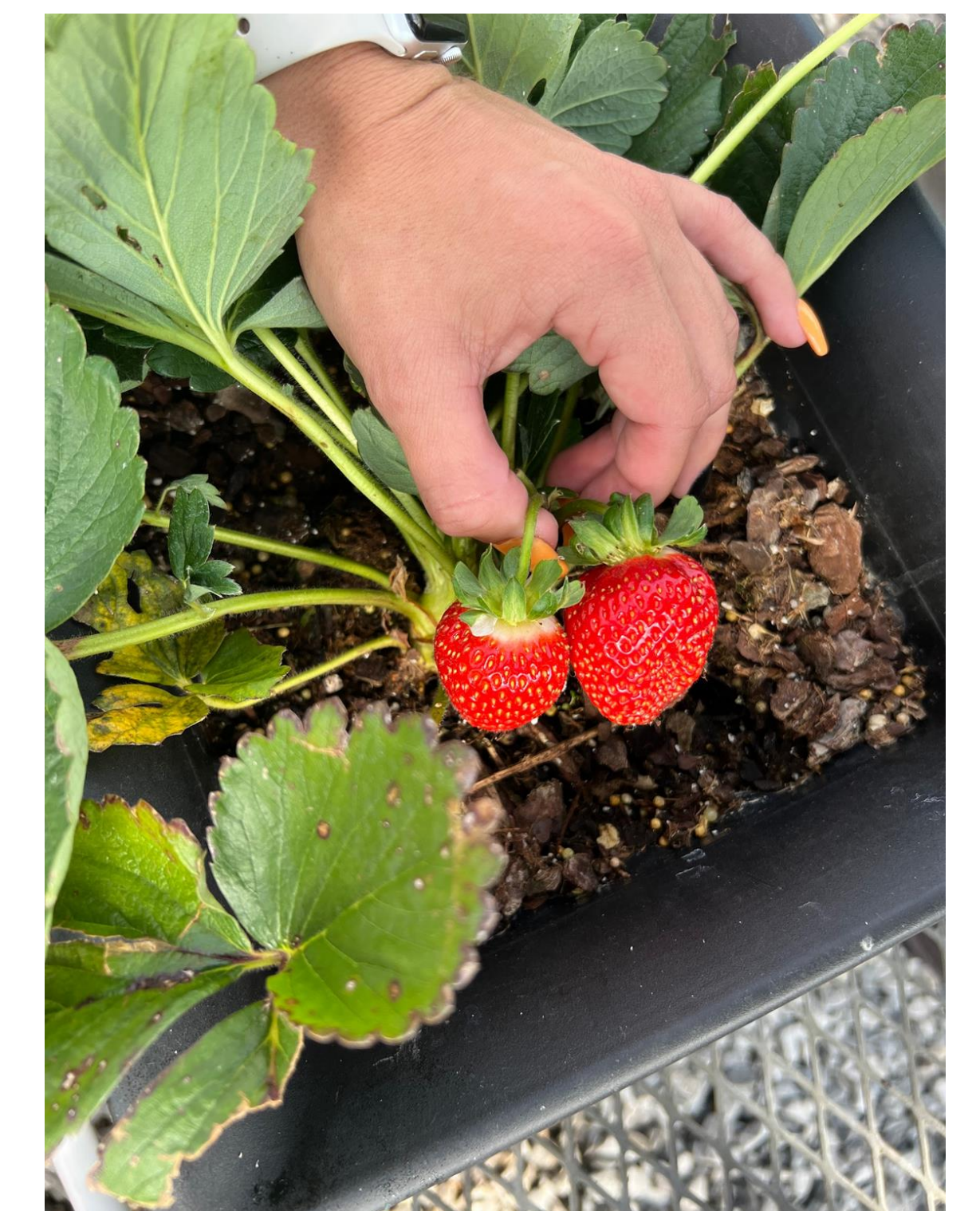


## Production

All strawberries for this research were grown by undergraduate students in the greenhouses and grow labs at Murray State University, Hutson School of Agriculture.

Bare root Albion crowns were planted in retail pots in the greenhouse. After the crowns had established healthy roots, students moved them to the outdoor irrigated mum pad.

Alpine strawberries for this project were germinated indoor under grow lights and finished in the greenhouse.



## Consumer Acceptance and Outreach

Consumer reaction was overwhelmingly positive. The potted strawberry plants were a well-accepted addition to fall mum sales. Albion strawberry plants saw stronger sales and greater consumer acceptance than Alpine strawberry plants. Both types of strawberries appear to be more “recession-proof” than mums.

Potted Albion strawberry plants appear to be a cost-effective, consumer-accepted option to offer in conjunction with fall mum sales.

Future work is planned related to consumer awareness of, and education about Alpine strawberries. Two Alpine strawberry focused outreach efforts are planned for the Spring 2023 to see if we can increase consumer acceptance of Alpine strawberry plants specifically.

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