

Raspberry fields forever

Short raspberry season almost over



Photos and story by BRAD
La BRIE

The short raspberry season is past its peak with only about a week's worth of picking left, according to local grower Gene Warren.

The plump, soft red morsel matured earlier than usual this year due to two weeks of dry weather in May. The crop ripened sooner and ripened smaller than it usually does, Warren said.

"I think that dry spell in May is the primary reason our crop is smaller," Warren said. "The amount of moisture sets the fruit."

The Boring farmer cautioned that not all farmers would agree with his assessment of the situation. Some local growers might have good crops, he said.

Gene and his wife, Judy, both manage the 15 acres of raspberries. They also have Marionberries, but that crop did not come through this year due to the extended cold in January. Marionberries, which got their name from Marion County, Oregon, is a huge blackberry that was developed by Oregon State University researchers. The coldness froze the canes, but the roots are O.K. and there

will be a crop next year, he said.

The raspberry crop not only is smaller this year but there are less berries overall than there were last year, Warren said.

"Unquestionably, there are less berries," he said. "This is just a wild guess but we probably have three-quarters of last year's crop." The flavor is fine though, he added.

As of this writing, the season has lasted about three weeks with only one week left. The Warrens use both hand pickers and a machine picker.



LOST IN a sea of raspberry bushes is Ronnie Scott, 15. Scott, of Eagle Creek, says he makes more money picking strawberries than he does picking raspberries. He makes \$2-\$3 a day picking the red berries.

Average or poor season?

PICKERS WERE earning 15 cents a pound for raspberries picked on the Warren farm last week.



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Raspberry harvest 'average', agent says

by SUZANNE PHILBROOK

As the raspberry season nears its end, Megan Hughes, Multnomah County Extension agent, termed the berry harvest "average" for Clackamas County growers.

"The season was pretty good," she said. "There was enough rain to keep the ground from drying up and it hasn't been too hot, except for a few days. It hasn't been a bad season."

Hughes, who serves the small fruits areas in both Multnomah and Clackamas counties, said the season will probably last until at least the end of July. Although this year's harvest has not been without problems, they are minimal, she added.

Despite the controversy over whether or not 10- and 11-year-olds can pick berries, the number of raspberry pickers appeared to be adequate, Hughes said. The growers whom she talked to did not seem to have a problem getting enough pickers.

More adults will pick raspberries than strawberries, she said, because they do not have to bend over so much. Besides, Hughes continued, the parents of children who might pick, but were not allowed to, gave up trying to get their children into the berry fields because of the lack of a permanent judicial decision in the matter.

Even though the growers would like a higher price on the berries, she said, they are getting 60 to 70 cents per pound this year. U-pickers are charged between 60 and 65 cents per pound.

There are approximately 12 to 15 growers in the Sandy-Boring area who provide for u-pick in their fields. The extension office has maps available upon request that indicate the location of u-pick farms.



RICHARD WESTCOTT of Boring concentrates on his work. The Warrens weren't getting enough pickers last week despite a report from a Multnomah County Extension agent that there were plenty of raspberry pickers in the Sandy area.