

# Take time to find the ripe strawberry

By Russ Parsons, Los Angeles Times

Strawberries used to be a springtime treat, available for only a few months and treasured. But because we love strawberries so much, growers have turned them into a year-round staple, the parsley of the breakfast plate. Still, at this time of year there is a calling, and if you know what you're doing, you can find strawberries that will remind you of the old days, when they were special.

The trick is to follow the farmer. Growing great strawberries is a tricky business, dependent not only on all of the normal agricultural attentions, but also on the specific variety (most commercial berries are bland and firm), and weather (strawberries are tremendously sensitive to climate).

But even when those factors all line up, the berries can be less than ideal as strawberry plants cycle between putting their energy into growing fruit and growing foliage. If you get them when they're pushing leaves, the flavor will not be what you're hoping for.

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