

NETAFIM DRIP IRRIGATION SUCCESS STORY

STRAWBERRIES

SUPERNET MICRO-SPRINKLERS ENSURE EFFECTIVE CROP ESTABLISHMENT WHILE DRIP IRRIGATION IMPROVES EFFICIENCY

Successfully monitoring the initial growth of newly transplanted strawberries is a major determinant of the productivity of a season's harvest and Oxnard strawberry grower, Reggie Kawano says using Netafim's SuperNet Micro-Sprinkler system is a key factor in effective crop establishment.

"I like to use the micros to establish the plant because I get a more uniform stand," he says. Young strawberry plants can be very sensitive to salinity problems so using overhead watering techniques, such as micro-sprinklers, is an efficient tool for removing salts from the root zone. In regards to the entire strawberry season, Reggie added, "Drip helps you save water and grow a better crop." He uses micro-sprinklers starting around the first of October to properly establish the transplants, because the sprinkler pattern and uniformity play a vital role during the first month. He then switches to using subsurface drip for the crop's irrigation needs during the rest of the season.

As the season progresses and he notices an increase in mite activity, the micro-sprinklers are an effective tool to rejuvenate the strawberry plants. He can easily switch between both methods of irrigation since they are separate in terms of having different control valves and pressure requirements. The drought, he says, over the last few years, caused an increase in harmful mite populations prowling on stressed plants during dry and windy periods particularly when the strong Santa Ana winds are prevalent. "I noticed during these times I could revive the plants by switching to the micro-sprinklers," he said of the dual watering system he uses. "I like that I can go either way to get the results I need."

While micro-sprinklers offer important benefits during the early establishment and growth of the strawberry crop, Reggie likes the flexibility of using drip later in the season to apply fertilizers and as it gets closer to harvest time, drip makes it easier to quickly get into the fields.

Over the years, he has witnessed major changes in production agriculture. He grew up on a family farm and helped out after school and during school breaks. After graduating from high school in 1976, he decided to pursue agriculture as a profession. In 1980, he began his career in the strawberry industry and, while working for a previous employer, was part of the early adoption of moving from furrow irrigation into drip systems to grow berries. Besides water savings and using driplines to provide timely inputs to the plants, growers recognized the value of curtailing unnecessary runoff.

Reggie currently works as a ranch manager for Reiter Brothers, where he grows two strawberry crops a year. His productivity is dependent on using the best available growing practices and he says the advent of drip irrigation is responsible for creating a number of improvements to growing strawberries. "Drip is a tool that helps improve the efficiency of growing the crop and I like the effectiveness of using micro-sprinklers for establishing transplants," he states succinctly.

With the busy season between October to the end of June each year, Reggie's reliance on a proven irrigation method is of paramount importance to staying on schedule and delivering a high yield, high quality crop.

