

New Strawberry Variety Released By NC State; Being Tested In Virginia Tech Study

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Over the years that strawberry plasticulture has been implemented in the region, growers have relied on only a few cultivars, most notably "Chandler" and "Camarosa", to support this high-dollar industry. Last month, Dr. Jim Ballington of NC State announced the public release of a new cultivar developed through his breeding program. Named "Bish" after the late Dr. Eric Bish, it is a result of strain selections conducted since 1995. Formerly known as NCR 95-08, this variety has been trialed extensively across the coastal plains, piedmont and mountain areas. Its outstanding characteristic is that it is consistently more resistant to anthracnose fruit rot as compared to "Chandler" and "Camarosa". Dr. Ballington states in a recent issue of "The NC Strawberry Grower" : "the variety looks like Delmarvel, but is bigger, more productive and adapted to plasticulture. Though the yield of "Bish" has not been as high numerically as "Chandler" and "Camarosa", it is has often not been statistically different than them. Fruit size is equal or better than "Chandler", and is also equal in other traits, with the exception of flesh color. It has been rated superior in flavor to "Camarosa", and is equal or better than it in general appearance, symmetry, and skin color. Fruit firmness and skin toughness are better than "Chandler", but not "Camarosa".

Here at Virginia Tech, Dr. Joel Shuman and myself currently have a Virginia Agriculture Council funded project underway to evaluate strawberry anthracnose resistance and various chemical control methods in the field and in a controlled greenhouse setting. NC 95-08 or "Bish" was included in our experiments, along with "Sweet Charlie", "Chandler" and "Camarosa". A key component of this research is to evaluate the effectiveness of Actiguard, a new material known to induce resistance mechanisms in the plant. It is being compared with several other fungicide materials. In the study, anthracnose will be introduced in the plantings, and conditions created to induce its development. It will be interesting to note the performance of the varieties, including "Bish" and interactions with chemical treatments.

On a final note, Dr. Ballington states that limited quantities of "Bish" will be available from licensed nurseries in the fall of 2003. It is the first patented variety developed at NC State and royalties will be used to help fund the strawberry breeding program and support the new NCSU Micro-Propagation Unit's "Clean Plant Program".

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