

OUT OF SEASON



I love strawberries. I really do. Growing up in rural America in the 1960s and '70s, I ate a lot of food from our family garden. I use the term “family garden” loosely. Mom and Dad did most of the work. My brother and I helped too, just in a different way: “Don’t step on the runners” and “Can’t you find a different place to play?” are a couple of prime examples.

Our garden produced a lot. Some things I liked, and some things evidently tasted better once you got older. But the strawberries I loved — picked fresh in our own back yard.

Well, I should qualify that a little. I loved them for about the first 3 or 4 days. After that, the 9th serving of shortcake began to lose its luster. So did the smell of the third batch of strawberries boiled on the stove to make strawberry jam. But the strawberries kept coming. Pretty soon, we were all glad that strawberries only came once a year. It would get so bad that Mom called strawberries names that weren’t in the botany books. And it was that way with everything the garden produced — corn, squash, green beans — good at first, plentiful when they were in season, then gone for another year.

I remember those times as I walk through the grocery store in our neighborhood. I sometimes think of these mammoth temples of food as the true modern marvels of our era. Often, my daughter and I will take a trip to the supermarket to get her favorite fruit — strawberries. But this time, we’re getting them in January...a little out of season in Minnesota. And we’re getting a quart...just enough to enjoy, but not so much that we start calling them unbotanical names.

We may not want strawberries for another month, but they’ll be there when we do...thanks to the network of modern agriculture and the science of crop nutrition, including the critical role of soil testing.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "T. Scott Murrell". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each word being capitalized and prominent.

Scott Murrell

PPI Northcentral Director

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WITH PLANT FOOD

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