UNIT 1

Strawberries for Food and Profit
## Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Specific goals of this project</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding Needs of Youth</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characteristics of Youth</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implications for Leaders</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-H Educational Experiences</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family involvement</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tours and field trips</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrations</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision-making and judging</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussions and problem-solving</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community service</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting Cooperation and Involvement from Parents</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding the 4-H Member</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognizing the 4-H member</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Strawberry Project</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strawberry Varieties and Cultural Practices</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completion of the Project</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Record Book</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting Ready for Roundup</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reviewing the Member’s Project Record Book</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan and Prepare for Strawberry Project: Checklist</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schedule of Meeting Topics and Activities</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January and February</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April and May</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June, July, and August</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Welcome to *Strawberries for Food and Profit.*
The purpose of this guide is to provide leaders with some ideas and suggestions that will be helpful in assisting 4-H youngsters to have an enjoyable and more satisfying educational experience in their strawberry project. The strawberry project supports 4-H, which is an educational program designed to help develop attitudes, values, and skills that will assist young people in becoming productive members of society.

The 4-H emblem represents the head, heart, hands, and health, which correspond with educational, moral, work, and health ethics. One purpose of 4-H is to provide hands-on experiences and opportunities to youth for developing their highest potentials in these areas.

### Specific goals supported by this project

1. developing concern for the society and larger world
2. increasing understanding of science and appreciation for nature
3. developing good consumer skills
4. developing life skills that include: creative use of leisure time; marketable attitudes and skills leading to a career; desirable interpersonal relationships; responsible citizenship; leadership; communication skills; and responsibility.

### Understanding needs of youth

To fulfill the objectives of the 4-H program, it is important to understand common needs of youth. These basic needs must be met in order for youth to progress to adulthood in a healthy manner. These needs include:

- to experience a satisfactory self-concept
- to experience success in achievement
- to become independent individuals
- to experience adventure
- to develop and accept one’s sex role
- to experience acceptance by peers and adults

### Characteristics of youth

Although children develop individual personalities, some characteristics are commonly shared by youth 12 to 14 years old:

- They are learning to understand their bodies and develop a positive attitude toward sex.
- They have great need to feel wanted by contemporaries and be at ease with the opposite sex.
- They find joy and excitement in the active use of mind and body to express a philosophy of life.
- They are interested in pinpointing and finding answers for their own problems, with supervision.

### Implications for leaders

- Constant assurance is necessary to feel normal. Youth want to be part of something bigger than their world.
- Programs should continue to be one-sex, except when objective is to know and feel at ease with opposite sex.
- Small group discussions to explore subjects of concern will stimulate opinions.
- Respected adult’s opinion is regarded highly, but don’t make decisions for them or force opinions on them.

To summarize the key concepts outlined above, when working with youth this age, remember:

- Youngsters have zeal and vigor to direct individual lives; they want and need to feel they belong to an intimate group their own age and sex.
- The more important programs are those which invite recognition from peers rather than adults.
- This is an appropriate time to increase their acquaintance with the world at large through exploration.
- Social and other activities including both sexes are of interest if well planned ahead of time, primarily by the youngsters involved.
- Association with high-minded adults is very important at this time for youth to try out their values, to test their thinking, and to develop and challenge ideas for solutions.
4-H educational experiences

As a leader you can increase and maintain the interest that is raised by allowing members to help plan and conduct community events. Members gain leadership and group skills by participating in making and carrying out plans. Some ideas you can use are:

Family involvement in a kick-off party for present and prospective members and their parents generates enthusiasm for the new year. Parents’ events might include an evening program presented by members, a potluck meeting with a short 4-H program, or a summer family picnic.

Tours and field trips are educational as well as recreational if planned ahead of time.

Demonstrations at local meetings are good preparation for a similar county-wide event. Have youth give demonstrations to community organizations including nursery and garden clubs, parent-teacher associations and service groups, and to nursing and retirement homes.

Decision-making and judging begin by making choices between two or more things and being able to explain the reasons for these choices. Making decisions based on standards of quality is a very useful skill. You can teach these standards by providing opportunities for youth to choose and compare products and plant materials and having them discuss, compare, and contrast the strong and weak points of each. Contact your county extension office for publications that deal with topics of interest to youngsters.

Discussions and problem-solving are effective ways for youth to teach themselves different subjects, to gather experience in presenting their views and opinions to a group, and to learn the art of active listening. As a leader, you can stimulate thinking and problem-solving abilities through many of the hands-on activities. You can also generate discussions by planning thoughtful and thought-provoking questions to youth.

Community service is an integral part of 4-H. Sharing with others allows youth to practice leadership and communication skills, develop commitment to the community and its needs, and it also encourages family involvement. This sharing spirit will contribute to youth’s sense of membership in the community. Exhibits used at local events for parents, friends, and community members are an excellent way to recognize youth and to promote the 4-H program you conduct.

The guide to human services in your local telephone directory can be consulted for listings of agencies and centers that might appreciate your group’s contribution. Such activities might include giving presentations to a health-care facility, senior citizen’s group, making an audio tape for the blind, or having youth identify activities to become involved in.

Getting cooperation and involvement from parents

Research has shown that where parent cooperation is good we usually find good performance of the youngster in the 4-H program. Take every opportunity to bring the parents in closer contact with the 4-H program. Parents are usually ready to help in one way or another with the program. Many are waiting to be asked and you may be missing out on a valuable resource by not asking for their qualified assistance. Another old adage is that there is danger in overworking the lead horse. The solution is to work for wider participation by more parents.

Understanding the 4-H member

It will help you a great deal if you will think of each youngster in your group as a different individual rather than as a group of like individuals. They have different desires to be satisfied (reasons they joined), different home situations, different abilities and capabilities, and different personalities. Only by knowing as much as possible about each individual youngster will you be in a position to be of maximum influence on them.

Recognizing the 4-H member

Recognition is a basic requirement for everyone. As a leader, you are in a position to give recognition in various ways: in group meetings, during informal or home visits, and during other activities in many different ways. The old adage “When you pat the shoulder of the boy or girl, you touch the heart of the parent,” is very real in 4-H work today. As a leader, if you can visit youngsters in your group at least once during the active 4-H season and observe their projects, you will be giving a very special type of recognition that should be
appreciated by both the youngster and their parents. Parental cooperation and involvement is an essential ingredient to help ensure success for the youngster.

There are many opportunities for recognition and it can come in many different forms. A warm friendly smile, a word of encouragement, a pat on the shoulder, a compliment given in public at the 4-H meeting or in front of another person, or a 4-H award ribbon. Guard against giving the 4-H member an unrealistic picture of themselves and be sure that the youngster's recognition is for what they have accomplished. Don't overdo giving recognition at the expense of the member and others in the club. Do keep in mind that at this developmental age, a respected adult's opinion is highly regarded and can make a difference in the life of a youngster.

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**The strawberry project**

Youngsters who are in the strawberry project for the first time should probably be at least 12 years old if they are to assume full responsibility for the project. Younger members may need parents to help guide, direct, encourage, and, in some cases, assist with the project. Younger members can assume complete responsibility when they have acquired enough skill.

A 1/20-acre plot with approximately 250 to 300 plants is recommended for a project. Fertilizer and spray recommendations given on an acre basis may easily be divided by 20 to get the proper figure for this size of plot.

The strawberry project is adaptable to 4-H members who live in a city, in the suburbs, in a rural area, or on a farm. Youngsters living in a small area, such as a standard city lot, may not have enough area to plant the prescribed number of plants. In this situation, adjustments should be made.

With the proper care of runner plants, the youngster should be able to harvest about 1 quart of strawberries for each plant set in the soil. A few individuals have picked two quarts for each original plant set. Even at a harvest rate of one-half quart per original plant set, the anticipated total yield is 125 quarts from 250 plants.

For example, if the average selling price is $1.50 per quart and each plant yields one-half quart, the youngster would gross about $187.50. The total cost of fertilizer, mulch, and plants for the above recommended size of project is about $50 if plant orders are pooled to obtain discounted prices on larger orders. A local nursery may quote the best price on the highest quality plants available. Be sure the nursery knows the pooled plant order is for 4-H members. Early ordering is helpful to all concerned with the project.

Youngsters should do a good job of preparing the soil, fertilizing, and planting. The most common reason for failure of the strawberry crop is poor weed control. Encourage the youngsters to perform numerous light hoeings rather than one or two heavy hoeings after the weeds have started to appear. Six or eight light hoeings may be needed. Quackgrass-infested fields should be avoided whenever possible. Since verticillium wilt can be a serious problem on strawberries, avoid sites previously planted to potatoes, tomatoes, peppers, and other Solanaceous crops. Old Timothy sods should be row-cropped at least a year before setting strawberry plants.

When meetings are held, members should be encouraged to give progress reports on their strawberry projects. Specific points to be brought out by experienced youngsters in their presentations include cultural and management practices such as: the number of plants surviving, the date of runner formation, runner plant placement, rainfall, and source of mulching materials. Additional activities for the members in the strawberry project to perform are given elsewhere in this guide.

**Strawberry varieties and cultural practices**

Variatel recommendations and cultural practices are thoroughly discussed in the member's project book. Your familiarity with the various parts of the project book will give you the best advantage to be more helpful to the members.

**Completion of the project**

This strawberry-growing project is designed to last for at least two years. The project should be both a profitable learning experience and business venture when it is well-managed. Many times it is not given the glamour and the public recognition that is true of some other 4-H projects. You can use the Schedule of Meeting Activities as a guide for directing the meetings in a direction that the
members want to pursue. You should make plans and arrangements ahead of time for the first-year completion requirements. Set up the arrangements for roundup during the harvest season of the second year.

The record book
The record book in *Strawberries for Food and Profit* has been organized to give the youngster the information necessary to do a satisfactory job of growing strawberries. Since growing strawberries is at least a two-year venture, the project book is designed to give members the opportunity to have an active record book for both of the years they are in the project. There is a group of questions related to their first-year work and another group for their second-year work. As the leader, you will be in a better position to assist the youngsters in strawberry work when you have a working knowledge of the contents of their project book and what is expected of them in this project.

Getting ready for roundup
Completion of the year’s work is an important factor used to evaluate a youngster’s achievement in a 4-H project. To bring more satisfaction to members, provisions should be made for youngsters to perform a definite completion activity for their first year of work. This might not be anything more than submitting the record book—completed to date—and a photo or two showing the planting. (There is a place in the record book for mounting pictures.) An opportunity for exhibiting some place in the community or at a strawberry roundup should be made available at harvest time of the second year. You will probably wish to work with the extension office on plans for strawberry roundup. The following ideas should be included in your plans:

1. Obtain a sponsor if possible. Men’s or women’s luncheon clubs, community clubs, grange organizations, and church groups make excellent sponsors.

2. Decide how many quarts should be exhibited by each member.

3. Provide members with directions on careful fruit selection.

4. Sell the berries at a set price, or at prices graduated according to quality, or by auction.

5. Obtain cooperation from the local newspaper, radio station, and other mass media in getting publicity for the event and follow-up.

6. Be sure to thank the sponsoring group.

You’ll want to offer strong incentives for strawberry project members to become involved in roundup activities. You should look for activities that go beyond having the members set up strawberry exhibits and receive awards. For example, local business owners and roadside fruit stand operators may be able to help explain the preparation and use of strawberry products. (In numerous other ways members may gain community awareness of their project achievements.) Community members who would be interested in learning more about the 4-H strawberry project include: other youngsters and their parents and neighbors; local grocers, ice cream manufacturers, nursery operators; and farmers, and agribusinesses. These individuals and your local civic and garden clubs may also be interested in supporting 4-H strawberry projects.

Reviewing the member’s project record book
Effort is often expended in direct proportion to the interest of the individual. You can help maintain the interest of members by indicating you are interested in them and their welfare. One of the many ways to show this interest is to look over the project record book with each members. This should be an incentive for the members to keep their records up-to-date. Records are sometimes kept as an end in themselves—merely to arrive at a determination of profit or loss. This is the immediate aim or goal. However, record keeping is one of those life skills that can be acquired when young and can be a very useful skill to the member in the years ahead.
Plan and prepare for strawberry project: checklist

1. Ordering plants
2. Taking care of plants upon arrival
3. Placing fertilizer
4. Planting at proper depth
5. Emphasizing timely hoeing
6. Placing runners
7. Removing excess plants
8. Removing blossoms
9. Ordering berry boxes in advance
10. Arranging for markets ahead of ripening date
11. Procuring straw for mulch
12. Deciding whether to keep strawberry planting for subsequent fruiting seasons
13. Protecting from frost in the fall
14. Controlling winter weeds
15. Removing mulch in the spring

March meeting topics:
Discuss site selection, soil preparation, fertilization, care of plants upon arrival, planting distance, planting depth. Second-year members may discuss mulch removal during March.

Activities: Visit two-year-old planting to observe mulching depth and method of straw removal. Visit a nursery or grower who sells certified plants.

Demonstrations: Perform the proper heeling-in method, set plants at proper depth, and explain reasons. Demonstrate placement of fertilizer.

April and May meeting topics:
Round table discussion of hoeing methods, spraying for weed and insect control, and flower removal. Second-year members can discuss picking techniques, ordering berry boxes, and sales outlets for their crops.

Activities: Bring shipped-in berries to meeting to compare with home-grown fruit. Visit a display of garden tools at hardware or department store.

Demonstrations: Proper hoeing methods, spraying or dusting for weed and insect control.

June, July, and August meeting topics:
Discussion of weed control methods, runner arrangement, young plant arrangement and spacing.

Activities: Judge berry exhibits; have strawberry shortcake or strawberry ice cream festival; place exhibits in fruit store window; roundup with sponsoring service club, etc.; visit planting that shows good management.

Demonstrations: Show variety of recipes using strawberries; Prepare fruit for freezing; proper strawberry management.

December meeting topics:
Applying mulch; reasons for mulching, mulch depth, and variety of materials that can be used.

Activities: Christmas party; community service that members can perform; inspect plantings for presence of winter annuals such as chickweed and determine treatment to be used.