HEAT LAUNCHES STRAWBERRY SEASON INTO FULL SPEED
Cheshire Farm Revives Pick-Your-Own Business
By Steve Jensen, Office of Commissioner Steven K. Reviczky

CHESHIRE - When Zentek Farms started offering pick-your-own strawberries in the late 1960s, customers had to literally watch their step if family matriarch Nellie was in the fields.

“She and my grandfather planted all the fields by hand and she didn’t like the idea of people stepping on her strawberries,” current farm owner Paul Zentek recalled Tuesday. “She’d go out in the rows and yell at people picking a hundred feet away. She was a tough one.”

These days, the atmosphere in the pick-your-own rows is a lot more casual, as customers wander through the fields filling baskets and munching an occasional sample.

After weeks of persistent rainy and cool conditions that delayed ripening by about a week, the recent hot spell has accelerated the picking season into full speed at farms across the state. Workers at Zentek have been picking about 500 quarts a day, said Ben Zentek, Paul’s son.

“They’re ripening so fast that we can pick in every row every day, as opposed to picking every other row like we normally do,” Ben said as he walked through the fields. “We got started about a week late, but hopefully the season will extend a week later on the other side.”

Ben said he was actually hoping for a little rain this week to help some of the berries “size up.” Not too much rain though, he said, because a heavy storm can damage the fruit and produce mold in the rows.

Nellie and her husband Pawel had bought the farm in 1914 after emigrating from Poland.

(Continued on Page 3)
### Wholesale Fruits & Vegetables

#### Boston Terminal and Wholesale Grower Prices

#### New England Grown

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fruit/vegetable</th>
<th>LOW</th>
<th>HIGH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alfa SPROUTS, 5 lb CTN</td>
<td>14.00</td>
<td>14.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alfa SPROUTS, 12-4 oz</td>
<td>16.00</td>
<td>16.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bean SPROUTS, 12-12 oz</td>
<td>12.00</td>
<td>15.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bean SPROUTS, 10 lbs</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>7.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHIVES, 1 lb FILM BAG</td>
<td>8.00</td>
<td>10.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIDER, APPLE, 4-1 GALLON</td>
<td>21.00</td>
<td>22.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIDER, APPLE, 9-1/2 GALLON</td>
<td>22.50</td>
<td>25.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIDDLEHEADS, 10 lbs</td>
<td>45.00</td>
<td>55.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARSNIPS, 20 lbs</td>
<td>24.00</td>
<td>25.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RADISHES, BUNCHES, 24</td>
<td>16.00</td>
<td>18.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RHUBARB, OPN FIELD, 20 lb</td>
<td>35.00</td>
<td>38.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOMS, GHS, CHERRY, 5 LBS</td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>14.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOMS, GHS, CHERRY, 8-10 oz</td>
<td>20.00</td>
<td>24.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOMS, GHS, VINERIPE, 11 LBS</td>
<td>11.00</td>
<td>12.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOMS, GHS, VINERIPE, 15 LBS</td>
<td>17.00</td>
<td>17.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOMS, GHS, VINERIPE, 25 LBS</td>
<td>15.00</td>
<td>20.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Shipped In

- **Asparagus**, NJ, L, 28 BN
- **Basil**, GA, 2-1/12 LB FILM
- **Bean, Green**, GA, MACHPK, BU
- **Beans, Fava**, NJ, BU
- **Beets, Red**, NJ, 12 BN
- **Beets, Old**, NJ, 25 LBS
- **Blueberries**, NJ, 12-1 PT
- **Bok Choy**, NJ, 2 BU
- **Bokchoy, Shanghai**, NJ, 10 LB
- **Cabbage**, GREEN, NJ, 50 LBS
- **Cabbage, Red**, GA, 50 LBS
- **Cabbage, Savoy**, GA, 1-3/4
- **Chinese Cabbage**, NJ, 12
- **Collards**, GA, 12 BN
- **Cuke Pickl**, NJ, 150-200
- **Dandelion Grns**, NJ, 12 BN
- **Edible Flowsr, Mix, CA, 96**
- **Eggplant**, NJ, 1-1/9
- **Endive**, NJ, 1.3 BU, 24
- **Escarole**, NJ, 1.3 BU, 24
- **Kale, Mixed Colors**, NJ, 12
- **Kale, Grns, Lacinato, NJ, 12 BN**
- **Kohlrabi, NJ, 12 BN, 1-3/5**
- **Lettuce, Boston**, NJ, 12
- **Lettuce, Bttn**, NJ, 12-4 OZ
- **Lettuce, Mesclin Mix, CA, 3 LB**
- **Lettuce, Mix, Mescl, Org, CA, 3 LB**
- **Lettuce, Oaklf**, CA, 2.2 LB
- **Lettuce, Rdf*, NJ, 24
- **Lettuce, Romaine, NJ, 24**
- **Leeks**, NJ, 12
- **Mache, Ghse, PA, 3 LBS**
- **Mustard, Curly**, 12 BN, 1-3/5
- **Peas, English, CA, BU**
- **Spinach, FLAT, CTN, NJ, 24**
- **Strawberries, CA, 8-1 LB**
- **Strawberries, Org, CA, 8-1 LB**
- **Swiss Chard**, NJ, 12
- **Tomato, 5X6FL, LT RD**, 25 LBS
- **Toms, Cherry**, ORG, FL, 1 PT
- **Turnips, PRPL Top, NJ, 25LB**
- **Turnip Top Greens, GA, 12**

### Middlesex Livestock Auction

#### Middlefield, CT - June 12, 2017

- **Low Calves**: 45-60 lbs.
  - Low: 45.00
  - High: 50.00
- **61-75 lbs.**: 55.00
- **76-90 lbs.**: 135.00
- **91-105 lbs.**: 145.00
- **106 lbs. & up**: 155.00
- **Farm Calves**: 165.00
- **80% lean**: 170.00
- **90% lean**: n/a
- **95% lean**: 110.00
- **100% lean**: n/a
- **Bulls**: 80.00
- **Steers**: 88.00
- **Feeder Heifers**: 125.00
- **Beef Heifers**: 85.00
- **Feeder Steers**: 100.00
- **Beech Steers**: 88.00
- **Feeder Bulls**: 125.00
- **Beef Bulls**: 85.00
- **Replacement Cows**: n/a
- **Replacement Heifers**: n/a
- **Boars**: n/a
- **Sows**: n/a
- **Butcher Hogs**: n/a
- **Feeder Pigs each**: n/a
- **Sheep**: 65.00
- **Lambs**: 75.00
- **Gos**: 80.00
- **Kid Goats**: 45.00
- **Canners**: n/a
- **Utility Grade Cows**: 73.50
- **Rabbits**: 5.00
- **Chicks**: 5.00
- **Ducks**: 16.00

#### Northeast Eggs/USDA

- **Extra Large**: .63
- **Large**: .57
- **Medium**: .49

#### New England Shell Eggs

- **Per doz. Grade A brown in carton delivered door. (Range)**
- **XTRA LARGE**: 1.16
- **LARGE**: 1.06
- **MEDIUM**: .78
- **SMALL**: .48

#### Virginia Farmers’ Market

- **Vegetable prices from May 31, 2017. $ per unit.**
- **Asparagus**, per lb.: 5.00
- **Beets, bunch**: 3.00
- **Bok Choy**, per bunch: 3.00
- **Broccoli**, bunch: 3.00
- **Broccoli per lb.**: 2.00
- **Cabbage, per head**: 1.00
- **Carrots, bunch**: 3.00
- **Cauliflower, head**: 3.00
- **Egg, per dozen**: 3.00
- **Greens**, bunch: 3.00
- **Herbs, bunch**: 1.50
- **Honey, 16 oz jar**: 8.00
- **Kale, bunch**: 3.00
- **Leek, head**: 2.00
- **Greenbeans, per box**: 7.00
- **Onions, spring, bunch**: 1.00
- **Radishes, bunch**: 1.25
- **Spinach**, per bag: 3.00
- **Squash, lb.**: 1.50
- **Tomatoes, lb.**: 4.00
- **Tons**: 2.50
(Continued from Page 1)

After establishing a customer base for their tomatoes, peppers and eggplant, the couple decided to try their hand with a few acres of strawberries.

“It was an early crop so that meant early money,” Paul said.

As subsequent generations of Zenteks took over, the farm began to focus on growing and selling annual flowers and vegetable plants, and strawberries were abandoned for many years.

The family decided to start planting berries again in 2014, and the farm now supplies a number of farmstands in the area. The pick-your-own business is growing slowly, Ben said, as word gets out that they are again offering it.

Customers tend to return to the same farm every season, he said, so he expects it will take a few years to build a loyal following, especially when they are competing with larger farms that advertise heavily.

For the past two years, Zentek has supplied berries for Cheshire’s annual strawberry festival, which has drawn them some new customers.

“People like to pick local, so I think that once word gets around that we’re here we’ll be a lot busier with the pick-your-own,” Ben said.

FOR SALE

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The farm also grows about 60 acres of vegetables, including tomatoes that were finally able to be planted this week after fields dried out enough to be worked.

Strawberries are a perennial, but the Zenteks chop the fields and plant new ones at least every other year.

“After the first year, the berries just don’t get as big,” Paul explained.

So far, the farm has sold out their berry harvest every season, prompting them to plan an annual expansion.

“I’d like to add at least one new field every year,” Ben said. “There’s definitely a big market out there for strawberries.”

Connecticut Grown strawberries are June’s featured crop in Dept. of Agriculture promotions on broadcast and internet radio, as well as social media.

The “Just say yes to #CTGrown strawberries!” campaign—funded by a USDA Specialty Crop Grant, includes the message:

“Shortcake, jam, or FRESH from the field...how do YOU eat your Strawberries? Strawberry picking is FUN for the whole family! Head to a Connecticut strawberry patch today to create lasting memories and delicious dishes. Plan your visit at www.ctgrown.gov/strawberry”

64-R. Tew Produce wash line, 5’ table, 24” line – wash, grade and pack. Make a reasonable offer.203-521-3141 or 860-619-8030 leave message or mortensen23@aol.com
65-R. JD #5 mower w/attach, 2 way plow. Farmall Cub 2 way plows, snow plow, saw table. International 3 bottom plow quick hitch. 203-521-3141 or 860-619-8030 leave message or mortensen23@aol.com
67-R. 7x12’ heavy duty twin piston dump trailer. $4,500.00. 6x10 dump trailer. $3,800.00. Large log splitter with 11 H.P. Honda engine. $1,800.00. 6-wheel amphibious ATV project. Seats 4. $3,500.00. Solid maple butcher block 18x24. $350.00. Large Bolens GT 1800 lawn and garden tractor, 48” deck. 18 H.P. Hydro. $2,750.00. 8’ Harley rake. 3 P.H. power angle. Excellent condition. $7,500.00. Old 12” meat slicer. $250.00. NH L-554 skid-steer loader. Needs gas engine. $2,500.00. Foley Belsaw chainsaw, tool, and blade sharpening machine. $600.00. 860-663-1769 until 9 p.m.

WANTED

68-R. H.D. Commercial meat grinder. 860-663-1769 until 9 p.m.

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6-R. Farm/Land specializing in land, farms, and all types of Real Estate. Established Broker with a lifetime of agricultural experience and 40 years of finance. Representing both Buyers and Sellers. Call Clint Charter of Wallace-Tetreault Realty (860) 644-5667.
69-R. 10-12 acres of hay available to be cut and baled in Cheshire. Call Jim Fazzone 203-250-6677.
Above: Ben Zentek shows some of the ripe straw-
berries in the farm’s pick-your-own fields
Above right: A 1924 photo taken at the farm show-
ing Paul Zentek’s grandparents, Pawel and Nellie, and
other family members.
Right: The Farm, in Woodbury, is offering an unus-
usual addition to its spring annual hanging basket line
this year: the Hula Berry, a white strawberry that
tastes like a pineapple. The berry needs three white
berry plants to one red berry plant planted in close
proximity for pollination.
“ They are growing really well and customers are
very interested in this berry, ” said Michael Berecz,
whose family owns The Farm. “ We plan on selling
some as is in the baskets, and keeping some for field
production.”
Page 1 left: A graphic that is part of the Dept. of
Agriculture’s social media promotion of Connecticut
Grown strawberries.
Page 1 right: Ross Merriam, 2, of Cheshire, pops a
berry in his mouth while picking at Zentek Farms
Tuesday with his mother, Lauren.

Advertising Rates: Fifteen or fewer words: $3.75 per insertion. More than 15
words: 25 cents per word per insertion. Ads must be related to agriculture in
Connecticut and are accepted on a first-come, first-served basis. Payment must
be received by noon on Friday before publication the following Wednesday. Make
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and remittance to the department at 450 Columbus Blvd., Suite 701, Hartford, CT
06103. For more information contact Jane.Murdock@ct.gov or call 860-713-2588.