

Auckland Strawberry Variety trial 2023/24 season

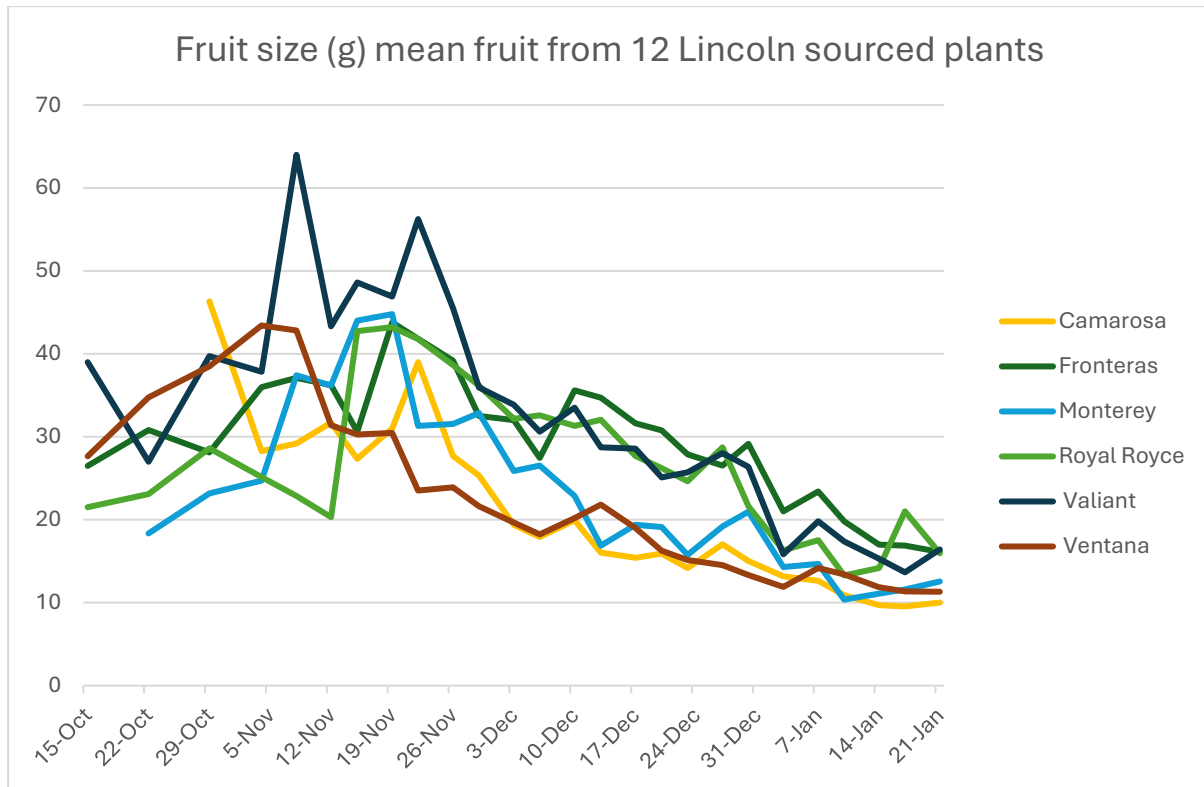
The Auckland trial concluded on 21st January and produced some really interesting results as well as some confusing ones. The trial included field grown plants from the main 3 runner producers as well as nuclear stock plants from Lincoln. The latter were in 10 cm square pots and so had an unfair advantage over the field grown plants. However not all the field growers had all the varieties so to do a sensible variety comparison, this report covers just the Lincoln grown plants.

They were planted in the trial block at Anthony Rakich's property in Auckland on 29th May in a 3 tier table top system and harvest started on 15th October and continued on a 2-3 times a week basis until the 21st January.

There are many factors that growers will take into consideration when deciding on what variety to grow. Probably the ultimate is total return from each variety. We were fortunate to be given the wholesale price at each picking day so on that basis have been able to record the season long return on a per plant basis by variety:

Variety	g/plant	Berry size	\$/plant
Cabrillo	1088.3	23.1	\$ 12.13
Camarosa	1075.2	19.9	\$ 12.57
Fortuna	1035.3	23.2	\$ 12.15
Fronteras	1009.1	27.1	\$ 11.16
Monterey	861.2	21.9	\$ 10.07
Moxie	900.6	28.0	\$ 10.52
Royal Royce	1230.3	25.4	\$ 14.90
Valiant	1265.6	27.7	\$ 14.69
Ventana	1117.7	20.3	\$ 13.21
Victor	979.4	26.5	\$ 12.10
Warrior	869.7	24.4	\$ 10.79

For the first time in many years, Ventana has been beaten in total value in the season long race by both Royal Royce and Valiant, highlighting the potential of these two new varieties. One of the major weaknesses of Ventana has been how the size tails off quickly in the season as shown by the following graph:



The issue of dealing with very large fruit from Valiant creates both a marketing opportunity and a potential problem for growers. Customers are unlikely to be happy with 250g chips containing just 4 fruit! This graph also highlights that Camarosa has also been superceded in terms of size.

Fruit size is a key component in costs of production as highlighted in a recent post. A rule of thumb to remember is half the fruit size, double the picking cost. This provides a substantial costs of production advantage to Moxie, Valiant, Fronteras, Victor and Royal Royce and we believe that all these varieties are worth a trial.

Plant availability of these newer varieties is likely to be an issue. To meet demand from growers, plant producers need at least 12 months advance notice as most growers do not grow plants “on spec”. Hopefully these results will encourage growers to at least put a trial block in of some of the new varieties.

We have additional data available. If you are wanting more detail on aspects like production timing, plant size notes or other specific information, contact us.