

around the valley

Market farmers welcome

spring weather

The same conditions backyard gardeners are enjoying have proven a blessing for those who make their living growing crops.

The recent dry weather trend, producers agree, is ideal for growing crops and a big improvement over last year's heavy rains.

"Things are much better than last spring," reported Debrah Dinter of Dinter's Nursery.

"Most people have their gardens in now and are looking forward to a pretty good year; certainly better than average."

Russell Stewart of Russell's Farm near Chemainus predicted a good year for corn and strawberry crops.

"Some of the newer strawberry fields are especially good," said Stewart earlier this week, "although it's a little too early to know how good they'll turn out."

Strawberries, he noted, got a slow start because of cooler spring temperatures but are now maturing well.

"If there is a problem it's a lack of rain," Stewart added.

Richards Trail farmer Bill Pastula has almost completed planting 150-acres of potatoes and beets.

"The weather is perfect," said Pastula, a Valley farmer for 30 years. "I think it's certain to be a good year."

Pastula said it's the earliest he's been able to plant the seed potatoes. Last year, he waited until July 6.

"We've got them in early so it means we'll get them off early," he noted - a positive sign for any farmer.

In a good year, the Pastula family harvests 20 tons of potatoes.

"The temperature is just right," agreed Mike Langtry of Cowichan Valley Produce. "Last year it rained for two months."

"We're ahead of 1984. Everything is up and growing."

Langtry said the farm has planted 100 acres of potatoes, 40



A GOOD START ... Bill Pastula checks seed potatoes during planting at Richards Trail farm. Predictions are being made for a good crop this year.

David Marsden photo

acres of corn, 20 acres of raspberries, and several acres of strawberries, cabbage and other vegetables.