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By Ed Leahy

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Early start for traditional strawberry season

Love Fresh Berries unveiled a giant strawberry yesterday to kick off the British growing season



British strawberries are blowing up in more ways than one with a giant berry inflated outside Tower Bridge yesterday to mark the season's start.

The most popular soft fruit, strawberry sales have continued to grow in the past year, achieving nine per cent value increase on this time in 2018, racking up £653 million sales.

In the past 12 months more than 131,000 tonnes of strawberries were sold in the UK, although faced competition from raspberries and blueberries, which grew in a value by 17 per cent and 14 per cent respectively in the past year.

Aldi laid claim to stocking the first British strawberry this year, at the start of February, two months before the traditional start of the season in May, albeit grown in a glasshouse.

Berry campaigners Love Fresh Berries installed a giant berry in London yesterday near Tower Bridge and London City Hall as the season enters full swing.

Nick Marston, chairman of British Summer Fruits, the industry body that represents 95 per cent of berries supplied to UK supermarkets, said: "Ongoing innovations in our industry including the introduction of great new varieties of berries delivering sweetness and flavour, and advanced

Dr Emma Derbyshire, British Summer Fruits' public health nutritionist, added: "Berries are a fantastic healthy snack that offer numerous health benefits. Not only is the whole strawberry rich in antioxidants, but the red fleshy part is abundant in Vitamin C. In fact, eating just nine strawberries (108g) can provide all of your recommended daily vitamin C intake."

<http://www.fruitnet.com/americafruit/article/1474/parts-of-san-diego-quarantined-as-psyllid-count-mounts>

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The British strawberry season has begun earlier this year according to British Summer Fruits, after warmer winter and spring have helped to speed up strawberry flowering and ripening.

growing techniques such as large-scale glasshouse production for season extension, has meant that we can now offer shoppers the freshest, highest-quality British berries for nine months of the year.”