Vegetable Tent: Strawberry Grey Mould After Delayed Harvest

Abstract

We discovered that ripe strawberries left on the plants too long became a source of grey mould (Botrytis). Once grey mould started on overripe fruit, it spread to nearby berries. We changed our practice to harvest more often, remove any damaged or mouldy fruit during picking, and keep the canopy drier with gentle airflow. Extension guidance agrees that frequent harvest and sanitation are core controls, alongside keeping fruit surfaces as dry as possible (Cornell CALS, 2025; LSU AgCenter, 2025; UC ANR, 2023; Penn State Extension, 2025).

Introduction

Smart Hydro is our small, tent-based hydroponic project. Strawberries rot quickly in warm, humid spaces. We needed a routine that stops mould before it starts.

Body

Why overripe fruit triggers problems.

- Botrytis thrives on ripe and overripe fruit and then produces spores that infect nearby berries (Penn State Extension, 2025).
- Grey mould risk rises with moisture and high humidity around flowers and fruit (UC ANR, 2023).

What we changed.

- Harvest interval: We moved to daily or alternate-day picking during flushes so overripe fruit never accumulates (Cornell CALS, 2025; LSU AgCenter, 2025).
- Sanitation during picking: We bag and remove mouldy or split fruit as we go; we don’t leave rejects in the tent (LSU AgCenter, 2025; Missouri Botanical Garden, 2024).
- Keep fruit dry: We run extraction and a light oscillating fan after irrigation to dry clusters; we avoid wetting fruit directly (UC ANR, 2023).

Conclusion

Our grey mould incidents fell when we shortened the harvest interval, removed problem fruit immediately, and kept fruit surfaces dry with steady, gentle airflow.

References

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