



Ashbern Farms

Ashbern Farms was established in 2016 when Brendon and Ashleigh Hoyle and Jon and Bernadine Carmichael combined their strawberry growing knowledge and industry passion to produce strawberries year-round at Queensland's two primary growing regions.

Ashbern Farms grows winter strawberries over 27 hectares at Beerwah on the Sunshine Coast for wholesale distribution between May and September; and 18 hectares at Stanthorpe, southern Queensland for wholesale distribution and its farm shop and pick-your-own operation between October and May.

How plug plants are solving climate challenges

Ashbern Farms has been ordering plants from JCLM Farming – among several suppliers – since the 2018-2019 season at Beerwah and the 2019-2020 season at Stanthorpe.

At the Sunshine Coast, following an initial harvest of early season variety Florida Beauty, the operation transitions to JCLM's mid-to-late season Red Rhapsody variety. The partnership expanded in 2025; in addition to supplying bare-root plants, JCLM Farming provided Red Rhapsody plug plants for a first-time trial.

However, Ashbern Farms' director Brendon Hoyle says the ideal planting window from mid-March to early April depends on readiness of bare root plants from the nursery's central Tasmanian location, which can be a challenge driven by climate.

"The availability of Red Rhapsody bare root plants doesn't always align with our planting window. It appears to be impacted by what's happening climatically in Tasmania in the growing phase and in the lead-up to the Sunshine Coast season because typically Tasmania is colder and growth is slower," he says.

"We want to plant early to get early access to the market and therefore, return better prices. In 2025, we ordered 150,000 bare root Red Rhapsody plants, accounting for approximately 12-15 per cent of the crop, but results were underwhelming.

"However, we had excellent results from a trial of 30,000 plug plants planted on April 1. The plants travelled well, were happy, healthy and strong, and established well.

“We found the survival rate of JCLM Farming’s plants to be fantastic and the crop even which lends itself well to managing nutrition and disease efficiently throughout the season. We can change the whole crop’s nutrition from a vegetative to a fruiting blend at the same time.”



Brendon and Ashleigh Hoyle at Ashbern Farms, Beerwah

For Ashbern Farms, the biggest difference between bare root and plug plants is that bare root plants come in various stages of growth, precipitating a range of variables during the season, he says.

“The fact that plug plants come on early is a big drawcard as it gets us into the market up to two weeks early.

“As we always do two years of trials, we’ll trial JCLM Farming’s Red Rhapsody plug plants again in 2026 and assess the results after the season before deciding whether to increase our order in the future.”

At the Granite Belt farm, Ashbern Farms’ varieties include the proprietary UC Cabrillo from the University of California Davis breeding program. JCLM Farming has served as the supplier for UCD Moxie plug plants.

Managing risk and trialing next-generation varieties

“Developing a relationship with your propagator is an important contributor to your operation’s success. Over time, you build trust, they know what we do and what we need and we know what they produce, so we can work together towards a common objective,” he says.

“We have supported JCLM Farming since 2016 as we understand how hard it is to become a propagator in the industry and the long-term investment required. Propagators are an integral part of our industry, providing the genetic foundation and plant health standards that lead to successful fruit production.”

“As farmers, we recognise the environmental, technical and capital challenges faced by propagators. Each season, we adapt, refine and work towards better resilience. By working together, we can support continuous improvement in plant quality, performance and reliability in the long term.”

He says Ashbern Farm is excited about new genetics becoming available to the industry from JCLM Farming in coming years such as those from the UC Davis program: UC Monarch and UC Surfline for Beerwah and UC Eclipse, UC Golden Gate, UC Keystone for Stanthorpe.

“We’re always happy to put our hand up to trial new varieties. We look forward to exploring varieties from the UC Davis program. Traits we’re looking for include rain hardiness, flavour, and ease of picking and packing – given the high cost of labour today.

“JCLM Farming is doing a great job of bringing new genetics from world-leading breeding programs to Australia to give strawberry growers more choice and Jack Beattie is playing a big part in that,” he says.

Brendon and Ashleigh Hoyle at Ashbern Farms, Beerwah



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