



Queensland Berries

Established in 2003, Queensland Berries is Australia's largest privately owned and operated strawberry, raspberry and blackberry enterprise.

It has 115 hectares of berries under production in the Caboolture region, south-east Queensland, where all berries are packed on site and supplied to Driscoll's Australia for distribution to leading supermarkets in Queensland, New South Wales, and Victoria between April and November.

Market leader banks on secure, high-yield production

The operation uses plants from several suppliers, including those grown at its own nursery in the cooler climates of Stanthorpe, southern Queensland. This is a strategic decision to mitigate disease risk and ensure early season market access to provide a retail advantage.

JCLM Farming's Tasmanian-based nursery has supplied Red Rhapsody (the most popular variety from the Queensland Department of Primary Industries' Australian Strawberry Breeding Program) as bare-root plants since 2018. Its first commercial supply of plug plants was in 2025. In that season, a total of 5.5 hectares of Red Rhapsody from JCLM Farming were grown at Caboolture, comprising 1.5 hectares of bare-root plants and four hectares of plug plants.

Queensland Berries' general manager Jared Maloney brings 15 years of Tasmanian berry growing experience to the Queensland operation. He says the collaboration, driven by JCLM Farming's rigorous biosecurity measures and superior plug plants aligns with the operation's move towards high-yield strawberry production.

“We're actively seeking to improve consistency and reduce risk. Moving from in-ground bed production (35 hectares of bare-root plants) to substrate (30 hectares of plugs) will boost labour efficiency, productivity and pest and disease control. We're targeting 85 per cent plug production from 2026,” he says.

Extending the season to capture better prices



“Capturing early-season pricing is critical. Bare-root production starts mid-June, while plug plants offer a crucial two-month advantage either side of the traditional Sunshine Coast season (May-October) due to earlier establishment.

“Another reason to move to plugs, is that there can be some uniformity issues with bare-root plants. Plugs are generally more reliable. During the 2025 season, we had some disappointing results from bare-root plants and some positive results from plugs. It’s why we use different plant types from different regions – to get a better yield curve. Relying on a single supplier poses a significant disease and supply risk to the business.”

He says JCLM Farming-supplied Red Rhapsody plugs in 2025 resulted in an increase in yield and

plant quality with a high number of trusses per plant due to the substrate method enabling the plant to take exactly what it required for optimal results.

“However, the return on investment in yield compares to varieties from other established nurseries, including our own,” he says.

The selection of JCLM Farming as a supplier was underpinned by three primary factors – superior plant health with minimal die-out, rapid establishment and early flowering, he says.

“Approximately eight per cent of JCLM Red Rhapsody production in 2025 was from flowers initiated in the crown, with plants taking about four to six weeks to fruit.”

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Healthy plants support a transition to substrate production

“JCLM’s Red Rhapsody plants arrive (after five days transit from Hobart, Tasmania) in very good health, with good vigour and a strong crown. They come with a good amount of leaf (the ideal being at least three) and a healthy root system. They establish well with minimum die-out. With Red Rhapsody, we can have fruit as early as four weeks after planting. Any nursery-initiated flowering is a bonus and helps us get fruit to market early to achieve better prices.

“It helps to develop a long-term relationship with your supplier as you know what you’re getting. Freight costs from Tasmania are high and add a percentage on plant costs to the Sunshine Coast and there can be issues during transit. However, as a fairly new propagator to the industry, JCLM Farming has its biosecurity controls in place and we trust the efficacy of the plants.”

In 2026, as Queensland Berries increases its substrate footprint, JCLM Farming will supply plugs of proven top-performing proprietary varieties UC Eclipse and UC Monarch from Global Plant Genetics’ University of California program, ushering in a new chapter in strawberry production for supplier and grower alike.



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