



PATRICK COLLARD / Staff

Robert "Walker" Miller, co-owner of The Happy Berry in Six Mile, is trying to install a wind machine to protect his crops from frost damage.

Six Mile farmer tries to outsmart Mother Nature

By Amy Clarke

PICKENS COUNTY NEWS
arclarke@greenvillenews.com

One local farmer is looking for ways to outsmart Mother Nature and keep his fruits flourishing even in the face of weather ravages.

Walker Miller, co-owner of The Happy Berry in Six Mile, is trying to install a wind machine that will help protect blueberries, blackberries and other crops from frost damage.

"Anything that is at risk from frost would be helped by a wind machine," he said.

Miller said his farm is already well-situated to withstand a freeze. Located on the eastern shore of Lake Keowee, the farm gets blanketed in warm, moist air from the lake, keeping it up to nine degrees warmer than surrounding areas, Miller said.

But deep freezes, like the one that struck the Southeast in April 2007, still pose a threat to budding fruit.

The wind machine works by drawing warm air from higher up and pushing it down onto the crops.

"As that cold air gets deeper and deeper, that warm air is up higher," he said. "The wind machine goes in a circle, so as it rotates, it's sucking the warm air down, blowing it out across the farm."

Though the machine is typically used only a few days a year when frost threatens, Miller said it's of great value during that time.

"Even in 2007, although we were the only ones with blueberries, we did not have as big a crop as we could have had," Miller said. "The name of the game in farming is volume."

Miller said the machine itself, which will cover about 10 acres, is being donated by a fellow grower who is investing in new equipment for his farm.

He said it's not certain that he'll have the funds to get the machine installed and operating. To be effective, he would need it up and running by around March 15, when blueberries begin their "green tip," he said.