



Vermont Vegetable and Berry News – January 10, 2017  
compiled by Vern Grubinger, University of Vermont Extension  
(802) 257-7967 ext. 303, [vernon.grubinger@uvm.edu](mailto:vernon.grubinger@uvm.edu)  
[www.uvm.edu/vtvegandberry](http://www.uvm.edu/vtvegandberry)

## REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

(Burlington) Another mild fall, another winter with more rain than snow (so far.) Outdoor greens finally petering out, though as the autumn has moderated, we've been consistently harvesting late enough into December to have some kale and other greens last into most Januarys. Tunnel crops have been pretty good, still some issues with early collapse of spinach seedlings no matter how much or little we water. Starting to see lots of Botrytis crown rot in the baby lettuce heads, hoping we can figure out some year what is causing the initial problem that the Botrytis then attacks. Already appreciating how tunnels are noticeably drier with regular ventilation from our new fans. Baby kale and arugula continue to be the go to crops for filling in harvested gaps in any tunnel.

(Weathersfield) Kale, spinach and greens look great for weekly pickings brought to market. Can always use more, hard to get houses cleaned out in time as fall sales for tomatoes were strong this year. Storage crops selling well. Great year for carrots, quality, yields and winter sales. Beets moving slower. Yields on potatoes lower due to lack of rain but demand strong. Huge squash crop, sales of Butternut slow, we suspect its due to some fake news suggesting other vegetables not liking squash.

(Fairfax) Storage crops are picking up. Sales have been consistent and now are starting to increase. Root crop quality has been excellent. The late fall allowed us to harvest well into November and the later growth has resulted in excellent size. A July 29th carrot planting sized up quite well, enough to have good flavor coming out of storage. Carrot taste has been excellent especially with Bolero and Nectar, both Nantes varieties. You know the carrots taste good when parents are telling you that their kids can't stop eating them. Now we hope they continue to hold well in storage.

(Shrewsbury) Evening Song Farm. Been busy these weeks doing lots of farm planning with respect to hiring, ordering supplies, revamping web and social media presence, crop planning, and generally planning how our farm may develop over the next several years. One shift that needs to start happening is growing less brassicas as a part of our crop mix...too many problems with cabbage aphids, Alternaria, black rot, flea beetles, and the expected arrival of Swede midge. Farmers' markets were slightly down for us in 2016, but wholesale accounts picked up the slack. Excited to continue researching the possibility of increasing high tunnel profitability with biomass heat...would love to learn from any growers with experience!

(Huntington) The huge production that was seen across much of the Northeast this year has me grateful for our local wholesale accounts, where demand has been strong and consistent. Regional markets have been pretty saturated for many of the storage crops that we grow (especially winter squash), with prices-paid reflecting the warm, dry summer. We finished a new insulated storage barn this summer, and the space has been a pleasure to work in. Winter farmers market sales have been slow - luckily they are a minor part of our business. Now time to get those W-2's in the mail...

(Ange-Gardien, Quebec) Wake up, breakfast, say bye to children to school. Digesting 2016 data, what were the problems, good moves, strength, weakness (how to overcome theses), costs of production, margins, planning, planning, planning, lunch. Shovel greenhouses, play with agribond, city swimming pool, skiing, fix things, arrange other stuff, say hi to children back from school. Spend some time with them. I agreed with my wife to prepare 1 or 2 dinner per week (up to march) before she gets back from work so: do that. Committee here, rendez-vous there, education, rest. Enjoy not having storage crops. Hope this does not sound too presumptuous. Don't worry, everything is not that nice for me too but I hope you all like winter as I do.

(Argyle NY) Pleasant Valley Farm. The fall started out warm but deteriorated in Dec. when we had a night at 10 below. Some damage to Asian greens but not bad. Kept air heat going in lettuce tunnel to make sure no damage (29 degrees) for that night. Spinach is small due to planting a week late (Oct 7) and we are getting what looks like downy mildew. We have 15 varieties and so far all varieties that have less than DM 11 have it. Ah yes, new challenges. Now comes figuring out the control. Let me know. Our root crops are storing and selling well along with the greens especially since no one at my market has greens anymore. It's going to be a challenge to supply the demand which at this point is about 125# of salad mix alone. We have outfitted our three tunnels with Greengro 220 heaters to aid with super cold night temps and harvesting times. This year we will continue to refine and get smaller.

## RENEW YOUR VVBGA MEMBERSHIP BEFORE RATES INCREASE

It only costs \$35 per farm to renew your Vermont Vegetable and Berry Growers Assn. membership for 2017, but the rate increases to \$45 after Jan. 31. You can join at:

<https://2017vvbga.eventbrite.com>

## VVBGA ANNUAL MEETING AND COVER CROPS CONFERENCE

Jan. 23 and 24, 2017 at Lake Morey Resort, Fairlee, VT. Pre-registration ends Jan. 20. See the programs for these events at:

<http://www.uvm.edu/vtvegandberry/meetings/AnnualMeeting2017.pdf>

Register to attend one or both events at:

<https://2017vvbga.eventbrite.com>

## VT TREE FRUIT GROWERS ASSN. ANNUAL MEETING

Feb 16. 2017, American Legion Hall, Middlebury VT. Monitoring caterpillar pests, orchard irrigation systems, fire blight and apple scab management and more, see:

<http://go.uvm.edu/2017applemeeting> Pre-registration ends Feb 6.

## NOFA-VT WINTER CONFERENCE

Feb 18-20, 2017. Burlington VT.

<http://nofavt.org/events/winter-conference>

## ORGANIC STRAWBERRY SCHOOL

Save the date: March 6, Lake Morey Resort, Fairlee VT.

## GROWING PLACES COURSE

This short, online-course for aspiring and start-up farmers takes place January 16-February 6, 2017. The cost is \$150. It is a non-credit, Extension course that helps beginning farmers and ranchers learn the nuts and bolts of successful farm business start-up. Topics include goal-setting, resource assessment, decision-making, risk assessment, and financial and marketing basics. More information is on the UVM Extension New Farmer Project website, or email [newfarmer@uvm.edu](mailto:newfarmer@uvm.edu).

## NAP: LOW COST 'DISASTER INSURANCE' FOR CROPS

The Non-Insured Assistance Program offered by Farm Service Agency (FSA) provides insurance protection against losses due to drought, freeze, hail, excessive moisture, strong winds, and some other natural factors. Different levels of coverage for crop losses and market prices are available. Cost starts at \$250 per crop, or \$750 for three or more crops (grown in the same county). Those fees are waived for beginning farmers (with less than ten years of experience) and limited resource producers. The higher levels of coverage are available at a reduced rate for these groups. The deadline to enroll for coverage of annual vegetable crops is March 15, 2017. Contact your local FSA office: <https://www.fsa.usda.gov/state-offices/Vermont/>

## NATIONAL YOUNG FARMERS SURVEY

The National Young Farmers Coalition is conducting this survey in partnership with George Washington University. They will use this information to guide their work and to craft a policy platform aimed at helping young people enter agriculture. Responses are confidential, and you can get results of the survey by providing your email address at the end of the survey. Questions: contact Hanna Seltz at [hanna@youngfarmers.org](mailto:hanna@youngfarmers.org) or (518) 643-3564 x216. The survey is at: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/TQ3HFR3>