



Vermont Vegetable and Berry News – Oct. 23, 2012  
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## REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

(Montpelier) Things are winding down quickly. Last few markets through the end of the month. Winter CSA is launched and interest is good. The early cold weather is allowing value added product sales to increase earlier than the last few years. Spinach and salad houses for the winter are loaded and coming on fine. Already getting requests but it is not ready yet. On this is the worst year for deer damage that I have had in 12 years. My theory is that the mild winter last year along with no wild apples has driven them into the farm. It's as if they are starving to death. I have lost virtually all my fall plantings to them. One night I had 12 does in one broccoli planting. They are even starting to go after a late planting of leeks. Another theory for which I sadly have no data or control to prove but I strongly believe is that I have further benefited from my nematode applications in the greenhouses this summer. I am not seeing my usual very high population of crickets and late season grasshoppers that tend to damage the spinach in particular. The application of nematodes under the white plastic may have allowed them to really become established and thrive due to the more constant temperature and moisture. All in all a pretty good year. Plenty of projects done, good sales but it is time to look for an alternative to the local farmer's market in regards to revenue. I value the marketing and the customer contact, it's fun visiting with everyone, but I think that once your business reaches a certain level of maturity it's time to make room for a newer smaller grower that needs access to the direct retail revenue. So this winter I will be planning a transition; besides it would be nice to have 'weekends off' occasionally.

(Pownal) We had 24 degrees by the farmhouse on that cold night last week and it was 22 to 23 in the field according to the thermometer. We double covered and used many hoops on lettuces, spinach and baby greens. They were fine and they were in a colder field. I think that lots of hoops are key with delicate greens. The cabbages, cauliflower, broccoli, kohlrabi, and Chinese cabbage were single covered using Agri-19 covers. The covered crops looked great when we took the covers off. The non-covered crops had discoloration on the leaves and look

liked they were zapped pretty good. Really glad we toiled with row cover all day Thursday and Friday. My crew is great and makes it all fun!

(Ferrisburgh) Finally got the last of the potatoes harvested. Needs to dry out a bit before can work the fields to seed with winter rye. Already planning changes to implement for better yields next year. Farmers' markets are winding down; wholesale sales to schools are going well.

(Westfield) Starting to plant the garlic with a little bit of drier weather, all the storage crops are in. The carrots, winter squash, and potatoes did very well, but my onion crop was a disaster; there is always next year. Spinach and Asian greens are doing well in the greenhouse, the last seeding was a little bit late for this cloudy October and may not size up.

(Plainfield) Nice weather to finish harvesting root crops. Still waiting for about half of my rutabagas to size up. Nutrient deficiency? Greenhouses emptied out of tomato debris, ready for compost and seeding to spinach. Hope to get garlic planted this week. Hope to sell out butternut, cabbage, kale and rutabagas by Thanksgiving. Looking forward to some rest and planning time.

(Weare NH) Still harvesting lots of greens and brassicas. Field clean up and prep for next season should be mostly wrapped up by this weekend. Excavation for high tunnel is complete. Will start erecting it next month. Got a lot done on the crop plan for next year; going to try a new winter market this year, better venue, closer too. Hope there will be a lot of carryover from summer market customers.

(Elmore) Excellent large tuber Jerusalem artichoke harvest this year; not so easy to find a market for it, though. Northern kiwis were loaded but the buyer at our local coop kept putting us off- then when he ordered, everyone was gone; probably birds and squirrels, but in 20 years they had never bothered the crop before! We have tested picking them unripe and letting them ripen at room temperature and will do that next year. Baby ginger was exciting to grow and a good conversation piece, but we planted about 55 lb and harvested 20 lb. We were told stores would buy it for up to \$15/lb, but we were only able to get \$8. Black walnuts are a good perennial tree crop and we are getting \$6/lb in the shell but you need a hammer and a rock or a black walnut heavy duty lever cracker to open; such a unique homegrown flavor! Late field peas planted as a cover crop yielded surprisingly good fresh eating peas; wondering if anyone markets these?

(Woodbury) Our cold snap was 22 last week. We had lots of beautiful broccoli in the field that we covered with two layers of Ag-19. It was 26 under the remay. The broccoli looks great and it's still growing in this nice weather. The broccoli that was outside the cover looks OK as well, so I guess broccoli is good down to at least 22. Not much left in the fields, cleaning up has moved closer to home, and the greenhouses are next. Still picking and selling tomatoes; never had them so disease free in the greenhouse before. Last market approaches, and that's OK with me. If all goes well we'll be sold out by Thanksgiving. Looking forward to next year already.

(Benson) Finally we are on schedule with root harvesting, fall cleanup, cover cropping, and winter greens planting. About 1/3 of carrots left, along with most rutabagas, turnips and parsnips for fall and winter sales. Lots of greens in mini-tunnels, low tunnels and our new high tunnel. Markets have been OK and we look forward to our new winter market location in Rutland. With a bit of weather luck we may be on to wood cutting next week.

(S. Burlington/Shelburne) The wet weather is making me forget how dry the summer was! First winter spinach harvest was last week and it is looking really nice. I have unintentional successions with my spinach, which should be a good thing, come March, to lengthen the harvest. All kale is growing nicely, I have been harvesting the new kale for about 3 weeks now, earlier than usual. I may delay planting next year, not that the early harvest is a bad thing. I did an intentional stagger this year with kale, and the later beds are just coming on for harvest now. Since it has been a cloudy and cooler October, I think the later date is just fine as a usual planting time. Finishing up putting up the winter covers, will likely begin to cover at night in a few weeks, if the temps drop more regularly.

(Plainfield NH) Killing frost for us got down to 22 degrees. Finishing harvesting potatoes, working on carrots and harvesting the rest as wholesale and CSA demands. SWD ultimately did not deal us a lethal blow as we originally thought. Showed up here late August after blueberries and before fall raspberries got into full swing. Sprayed three times, kept the fruit pretty well picked and there were some larvae, but a high percentage of sampled fruit showed no infestation, and where there was usually one larva and rarely double. The new pest this year is rodents. Everything from field mice to woodchucks was in great supply and now that they are running down on outdoor food sources they are trying to come inside. We have never experienced the level of pressure as this. We have a steady stream of kills in the snap traps, and my normally secure seed storage room has been violated and there we have been going through warfarin baits like Easter candy. I need to get the .22 out to reduce the red and gray squirrel population as they move into the barn and greenhouse areas and to work on the winter squash and chew on the barn soffits and jetwork to get inside for the winter. Seeing a lot of

damage in the root crops in the field, leading me to assume the pine vole population is spiking as well. I am very concerned about overwintering damage in the raspberries and blueberries from voles feeding on roots and tunneling. There always seems to be something.

(Argyle, NY) The season had the usual ups and downs with weather, more diseases than usual, but markets pretty average overall. Harvesting for the root cellar has been challenging but moving along. Sweet potatoes and winter squash were harvested one week and cured in a small insulated room with a heater and a large dehumidifier which works great. The root cellar has a specialized cooling system that maintains 95% humidity and we still have lots to pack in over the next month. Broccoli came on early and cauliflower is just starting in the fields; fall spinach, about 12 varieties, is doing great with Raccoon being one of our favorites. The winter tunnels are still being planted with some germ issues but the transplanted crops of chard, kale and Asian greens are growing tremendously and look fantastic. We have used Actinovate and Root Shield Plus as drenches for several years in the tunnels which helps eliminate many diseases. Soil tests show most things finally in balance in the tunnels after several years! The final tomatoes are coming out to make room for the last spinach transplants as we now have 3 high tunnels so have more flexibility of crops for all seasons. Onward to winter markets! Looking for winter interns if anyone has workers finishing up; contact Sandy Arnold at [arnold.pvf@gmail.com](mailto:arnold.pvf@gmail.com) or 518-955-6922.

(Fair Haven/Hampton NY) If we had not gotten a heavy frost a week ago we would still be pulling odds and ends: peppers, and eggplant were doing well and even beans were still offering some picking. But the frost put an end to that. So we are down to the end of the fall crops to be picked and getting everything ready for winter. The new home for our Rutland Winter market is still under construction but will be ready enough for opening on Nov. 3. Vendors are excited, the community is excited, and those of us who have been working to make this happen for several years are beyond excited. Prep for the winter Christmas tree and wreath season has kept us busy too. It is all coming so fast and so little time to get everything done!

(Little Compton RI) Frost last week hit us hard. Kohlrabi, broccoli and young kale etc. just weren't able to cope with the rapid cool down and got burnt pretty bad. We had covered tender lettuce but never thought we would have problems with the hardy Brassicas! We are finishing up curing sweet potatoes and winter squashes. I am going to pay attention to just how this investment translates to better quality and longevity. The next challenge will be to keep them at their optimum storage temperatures and humidity. I saw a simple moisture injection system attached to a local apple grower's cooler. I understand it is available from OESCO for a modest price and should help with keeping our storage rooms at the right humidity. Our winter

storage carrots did not fare well last year because of this and will get a monitoring device as well as the moisture injector. Broccoli rot has been a problem the last two weeks with the steady misty rain showers. Though we gave them ample and timely sprays of copper, it just couldn't handle the bacteria. We tried to run through the infected plantings and cut off the ruined crowns in hopes of at least stimulating the side shoots to give it a go as the plants are otherwise healthy. Farmers' markets are good with folks really picking up the fall Brussels sprouts etc. Deer keep switching their tastes and are now eating the carrot tops and actually pulling the carrots out of the ground! Looking forward to November, a good beer and a Sunday afternoon off.

(Salisbury NH) Buttoning up everything outside. Had quite a bit of broccoli side shoots before pulling up the plants. Almost everything harvested except leeks and Brussel sprouts, which didn't do well this year. Had a lot of stress from the drought but not sure if that is what caused sprouts to be tiny or large but not tight. Last year had so many beets we cut back this year and as Murphy's Law has it, this year the customers couldn't get enough beets! Hoophouse plastic isn't replaced yet. Good news for the beds getting plenty of rain as a 'cleanse'. Want to do soil test too before planting in the spring. Already planning for next year.

UPDATE FROM THE UVM PLANT DIAGNOSTIC CLINIC- Ann Hazelrigg

Greenhouse tomatoes: still finding some late blight as they finish up the season. Midges, which look like mosquitoes with feathery antennae under the hand lens, showed up at one location on some sticky cards. They like moist conditions and are not pests, see:

[http://www.hort.uconn.edu/ipm/greenhs/htms/ghsemsg\\_2010\\_4\\_apr12.htm](http://www.hort.uconn.edu/ipm/greenhs/htms/ghsemsg_2010_4_apr12.htm)

Potato aphids found, caused serious damage in one greenhouse. They are difficult to manage with predators. The UVM Entomology lab website has info on how to ID common aphids: <http://www.uvm.edu/~entlab/Greenhouse%20IPM/Pests&Beneficials/aphids.pdf>. For effective management of aphids with biological control, it is critical to identify the aphid since not all beneficials work on all aphid species. In addition, potato aphids are challenging because they reproduce more quickly than some other species so populations can increase rapidly, often too fast for parasites or predators to keep up. For this reason early detection and release of natural enemies before pest populations are high is critical. Another good website with images:

<http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/crops/facts/06-081.htm>.

Pumpkins: Phytophthora fruit rot seen on large harvested pumpkins. This really can move fast if fruits are sitting in the field and the soils are saturated for any length of time. The rot starts as a water soaked spot on the fruit, then quickly turns yeasty looking and expands rapidly. Using lots

of cultural practices is key to managing this pathogen: improving soil drainage, not moving the organism from field to field, rotation out of susceptible crops, see:  
[http://vegetablemdonline.ppath.cornell.edu/factsheets/Cucurbit\\_Phytoph.htm](http://vegetablemdonline.ppath.cornell.edu/factsheets/Cucurbit_Phytoph.htm)

Garlic: Lots of rot seen in cloves. Some were just Botrytis (gray mold) but several samples were inundated with onion bulb mites. These little pests can cause a lot of damage to onions and garlic. If you are seeing a lot of rot in your cloves, check for this. Fallow fields to allow complete decomposition of organic matter since this reduces field populations of the mite. Avoid planting successive onion or garlic crops. <http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/r584400111.html>. It is highly advisable to avoid planting cloves with browning or pitting, to avoid building up diseases or potentially spreading garlic bloat nematode. Other than hot water treatment there is little evidence that (organic) seed treatments are effective in controlling seed-borne diseases of pests. There is a narrow window between killing nematodes and killing garlic, see:  
<http://www.garlicgrowers.on.ca/documents/GGAO-article-2011-stem-bulb-treatments.pdf>