



Vermont Vegetable and Berry News – November 21, 2011
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REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

(Shelburne) Winter greenhouse is looking great. Everything is still growing because of the mild Oct/Nov. I would like things to stop growing right now, they are getting taller than my covers! This year is an experiment to see what will make it through the winter well compared to when I was over-wintering in Lansing, Michigan. Normal lows in Jan and Feb are 4 to 5 degrees cooler than in Lansing. Markets for the greens are strong!

(Jericho) More than doubled the winter hoophouse production space this winter and still wish we had more. When we put our first house up many years ago an experienced farmer told us we'd have 6 or more in no time, and he was right. They just seem to keep multiplying. Seeding with the Sutton seeder in the houses has resulted in great stands of greens with high yields. Mild fall has resulted in rapid growth and we have already completed third cuttings on some beds of arugula and mesclun that we seeded in late September. Some CSA members organized a community dance party this past weekend to raise funds for our farm in recovering from flood losses. Beyond the monetary generosity, it was an incredible evening of support, good will, and great music and dancing. Reminded us how much agriculture has always been a crucial part of community life in our rural state and will continue to be so even though fewer of us work the land now than in past generations.

(East Montpelier) Thanksgiving market went very well. Strong attendance; still a bit of grouching about pricing. I really think customers do not understand what this growing season was like. It will be interesting in Jan-Feb when items are not available. Greenhouses are loaded with winter salad and spinach, including the new one we built in October. We transplanted 6 week old 72 cell plugs into 5 beds at 4 feet wide and 88 feet long, I should be able to harvest by Christmas. First winter CSA is at 65 members and we are trying to take a few late sign-ups. There is some needed education around winter CSA's out there. I get the impression that this market concept is too new for people to grasp. Feedback from our first delivery has been extremely positive. Now if it would just finally snow so I can stop working! I have never been this far ahead with fall outside chores. It is going to make spring go a lot easier but I am tired and the need to sit and start planning is great. Have a great Turkeyday; enjoy family, friends, and great food.

(Burlington) We planted garlic on Friday. Now looking for mulch hay. We noticed that the Ground Hog radish aka daikon radish that we planted in a winter rye mix is doing great. We picked a few to add to a small home batch of kim chi. I felt like I was having a One Straw Revolution moment.

(Westminster West) We harvested the last beds and bunches of carrots on Nov 18. That's the latest we have ever harvested anything from the fields and it was a mild day for mid-November. Harvesting Swiss chard from grow bags set on benches in our main greenhouse and the results have been spectacular! Record sales at good prices at our last outdoor farmers' market. Good supply of storage onions, winter squash and carrots should keep our truck busy on wholesale route for last sales before Thanksgiving. Almost switching gears towards winter maintenance but first throwing in a few more beds of garlic tomorrow while the weather is good. Found a few boxes of seed garlic that I lost track of so in they go. Finishing up new spring development if the elusive plumber shows up. Busier then I would have thought for this time of year; looking forward to a day of thanks and then a trip to visit grandchild. Have a safe and restful holiday.

(Westfield) I just finished mulching the strawberries with perfect weather! I still have some field cleaning to do, and then all the activity will be in the greenhouses. The greenhouse crops look good, and are still growing. The few lettuces left in the greenhouses don't have any sign of frost damage which is very rare for me. Sales are good for this season.

(Fairfax) Still harvesting greens, arugula and Napa. Mild weather has been great. Now I just hope it stays, so the broccoli sizes up. Otherwise we're busy in the packinghouse. Even some late seeded (Oct. 31) rye/vetch came up.

(Benson) We are positioned well for winter. Have two tunnels with fall and overwinter greens, 700 ft. of mini tunnels with kale, chard, spinach and an assortment of Asian greens and mustards. Most of the fall cleanup and cover cropping is even done. The warm weather has caused more growth than expected which has been good for fall greens but put overwinter stuff at risk. We will cut the overwinter greens back to 3 inches then cover them when temps drop to the lower 20's or high teens. Markets are still strong, so we have no complaints.

(Stratham NH -seacoast) Amazing, we are still harvesting red raspberries on the weekend before Thanksgiving (no high tunnels or greenhouses)! Actually had blooms on a new highbush blueberry shoot. No doubt this will all end quickly. Arugula, Swiss chard, and kale (as usual) doing well this fall, but lettuce and spinach were slow growing and remain small. Tried sugar snap peas but didn't do well; suspect root disease. Broccoli is still side-shooting. Garlic is in the ground and mulched.

(Enfield NH) Mostly cleaning up the farm and doing projects that have been waiting to be done most of the summer. Still harvesting kale and chard in the field, plus have the last parsnips, carrots and rutabaga to bring in. Sales of storage crops good. Farmers market's OK but not good. Greens in the greenhouses coming along well; may have more greens than planned in December due to the warm November. Looking forward to NE Veg and Fruit in a few weeks.

(Little Compton RI) We lost fields of winter squash, etc. to water-borne Phytophthora and a carrot root rot. A bright spot is Brussels sprouts; we grew them on raised beds with plastic mulch. We finally gave them the attention they need including attention to the aphids that love fall brassicas. We start scouting late August and hit them twice in Sept and Oct with a soap type product. Hit them when the population is very low; if you let them build up it is too late because they get into the bottom of the sprouts and it is game over. The varieties we grew did not benefit from topping in late September; in fact, the pruning stimulated the plants to do weird things that made them almost unmarketable. Cyclamen mites are back on the greenhouse spinach but we are trying a biocontrol program with IPM Labs to keep them down.

(Durham CT) People love fall carrots. In second place is fall spinach, a favorite with just about everyone. Our six hoop houses are humming with greens such as red Russian kale, Lacanato kale, claytonia and spinach. We're trialing a few favorites of Di Cody's from Johnny's: Crocodile, Raccoon, Corvair and Tyee. They haven't been exposed to extreme low temperature yet, but have noticed that Raccoon and Crocodile grow unusually fast and taste great. Outside we have low tunnels with beets, chard, carrots and lettuce.

WORKSHOP ON VEGETABLE FARM ISSUES RELATED TO FLOODING

On Nov. 30 from 9-2 at the Berlin UVM Extension office this event will summarize lessons learned and available resources for farmers who experienced flooding. Topics include: findings of testing for soil contamination, FSA crop insurance, tax implications, financial planning, organic certification, NRCS programs, Agency of Agriculture resources. There will be time to discuss research needs and also for individual consultation.

PRACTICAL FOOD SAFETY WORKSHOP: WRITE YOUR OWN FOOD SAFETY PLAN

UVM Extension and NOFA-VT are offering a hands-on workshop on practical food safety for both small and diversified farms who market directly and locally. It will be held twice: at Screaming Ridge Farm in Montpelier (Dec. 7) and Woods Market Garden in Brandon (Dec. 8). The morning will describe specific areas of risk on small farms. The afternoon include a tour of the farm to discuss food safety practices and how they were implemented. Then, you will create a two-page draft of your own On-Farm Food Safety Plan with the specific action-steps needed to implement it. To register or for more info: Barbara at: 802-434-4122 or info@nofavt.org