



Vermont Vegetable and Berry News – November 23, 2010

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<http://www.uvm.edu/vtvegandberry>

REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

(E. Montpelier) Outside crops are pretty much done. Too much rain in a very short period caused a lot of loss due to nutrient leaching (yellowing of spinach) and fungus in the brassica salad mix. The September heat induced a lot of bolting. Some of the claytonia in the greenhouse is flowering as well. Plenty of tarnished plant bugs and cabbage loopers living under the row cover with the kale and late greens. Gave up on the Swiss chard and outside spinach. Greenhouses are looking very good, though the spinach is a bit odd in that yields per square foot seem to be low. One whole 30x96 house is planted to it. Five 4-foot wide beds with seven rows per bed. All transplanted plugs. Stuff looks great but just low weights. The salad house on the other hand is yielding three times as much per square foot and then some. Perhaps I have finally figured out the right cultivar mix and amount of each? Thanksgiving market was strong and well attended, my best market ever based on gross sales. People seemed happy and ready to shop, though spending cautiously due to the economy. Cover cropped fields with oilseed radish that did really well. Deer love them too! Late kale and Senposai doing well. Another drainage project in that field for next year. Have a great and tasty Thanksgiving, plenty to be thankful for after a very solid season.

(Sudbury) Everything quiet here as we prepare to hunker down for the winter. Garlic is planted, asparagus trimmed and all covered with straw along with the strawberries. Plenty of carrots remain in the ground and many will be harvested for the upcoming feast on Thursday. We will soon be scheduling meetings with our restaurants and planning for our seed orders.

(Dummerston) Great November for continuing harvest in the fields and growth in the greenhouses. The crew has 7 hoopouses planted for winter CSA so there will be no shortage of greens. Trying *Aphidoletes aphidimyza* predator to control aphids in the earlier-planted houses. They worked excellent in our biological program this year especially on the foxglove aphid. Also have 3 houses with 2-foot high wires and row cover, like those in the October Growing for Market article, to help hold maximum heat. Hoping that the retrofitting of styrofoam blueboard behind the greenhouse baseboard placed 15-18 inches into the ground will also help maintain temps and keep frost from the inside edges. Demand is very strong for local organic produce at our farmstand and regional markets for Thanksgiving. Now if the snow will just hold off until Christmas Eve.

(Durham CT) Fall greens are totally the best! We've got five houses loaded with inventory that we plan to sell slowly over the winter (maybe a January vacation to boot). My biggest regret is not having enough root crops. Carrot, beet sales have been strong, but alas we have now depleted everything. In the hoopouses, we're looking at spinach, red Russian kale, baby pak choi, Nelson and Cosmic Purple carrots, claytonia and Johnny's All Star lettuce mix. Outside, we've got a few dozen low tunnels full of spinach, beets, chard, carrots and lettuce. All of these have been purposely planted late with an eye towards late winter/early spring harvest. Curious to know people's luck with spinach varieties are. So far, we've tried Tyee, Regiment, Spargo and Giant Winter. Love this time of year.

(Little Compton RI) Thanksgiving sales were great this weekend; we looked good with all our greenhouse greens. We have been fortunate with the recent mild weather. It has help bring in some "hail Mary" crops of cauliflower and broccoli but at the same time it has been over-energizing for the greenhouse crops and many of them are too far ahead of themselves and we will be wanting for greens in December. We had a house with beautiful red leaf that wasn't red so we turned the fans down to 38 degrees and ran them for three nights with the temperature at 35 and the lettuce finished deep red for this week's harvest. We are trying to get a better feel for soil moisture needs of our plants; fearful of downy mildew we have kept them too dry and can see that now. We have some late planted carrots still putting on some girth outside. When a couple of high twenty degree nights give them a good sting we will flail mow them and rake off the tops; Next we will double row-cover them and when we hit the teens we will cover the whole area with an old greenhouse cover. We are experimenting with storing the carrots in the ground; voles are our biggest worry. We will monitor the beds weekly.

(Bath MI) Crops in the hoophouse are looking good and we had a great third week at the winter market. With the change in locations to an indoor venue it took a few weeks for customers to find us, but we only came home with 2 bags of spinach and 1 bunch of Hakurei turnips from last week's market. We are going to try another market on 12/11 that is happening once a month this winter. It is by far the biggest and busiest market in our area during spring and fall, but they haven't had a winter market before. It's is going to be in an empty store front in the mall across from their regular season market so we'll see how that goes. We spent yesterday doing one last big weeding in the hoophouse and have just a few more beds to go. Edges are cleaned up (which should help with the snails and slugs!) and water line trenches are filled in outside so hopefully no freezing water lines this winter. We also prepped some beds that we've harvested carrots out of already and are thinking about seeding them to see what happens. We know that if things germinate we won't get growth, but come February they will have already germinated and will be ready to go so we won't have the lag time of germination then. Spinach might go into at least 2 of those beds this weekend. We are a little concerned with the warmer temperatures since the last time this happened here in 2006 crops kept growing into January. In late January when the temps went back to a more "normal" level all that succulent growth really got hit hard. The shutters are set to open at 50F so we can try to keep it cooler in there. Asparagus outside now has compost and straw mulch and we are looking forward tour first harvest of off that in the Spring. It's just got the last of the green in it so will probably be cut down next week. We are thinking about covering 80 ft of the asparagus with a quick hoop/low tunnel in the Spring to see if we can push half of it few weeks earlier and by doing so make the harvest season longer when it gets combined with the 80ft from a non-covered row. Looking forward to getting into conference season to hear and learn from other farmers.

(Salisbury NH) Have just about cleaned up the fields; still a small amount of Brussels sprouts, beets, carrots and cabbage. The day neutral strawberries still haven't gone dormant. I am tempted to try some of the runners in the hoophouse to see what happens. We are holding them over one year to see what we get from Spring production (barring the evil tarnished plant bug damage!). Inside the hoophouse we are having lots of moisture on the plastic as we got 4 year plastic but not IR/anti-condensation plastic. We'll do that next time. We don't have any irrigation and really haven't watered much in the last 3 weeks except for some lettuce we transplanted from the field to the hoophouse. Our French Breakfast radishes were really funky--all growth from the ground up rather than in the ground. Taste was okay but up near the top of plant it was a little soft or hollow feeling.

This was a test to see what grows anyway. Spinach is wonderful (Tyee). Winter Density lettuce is very nice too. Still haven't gotten to the row covers. The metal hoops are just too much to bend and are pretty high off the plants. We're probably going to do string (we only have a 12' x 48' hoophouse) to support row covers. So far everything is growing very slowly. Spectrum greens tends to grow pretty fast--that is mostly brassicas in the mix. Wildfire lettuce mix looks nice but is very slow growing. Carrots are Napoli. Everything is in raised beds with 1"x8" untreated pine boards. We like the clean look and nice pathways. Not sure how people do it without the boards, keeping the soil out of the pathways. We also don't have any automatic venting. We open the door when it gets hot but that is also a problem since we both work off farm. If it's going to be nice we might crack the door and hope for the best. When the sun goes down the temperature drops very quickly.

(Argyle NY) The push of Thanksgiving is over for us and now the job of getting the last vegetables in the root cellar is on. Leeks, celery, cabbage, Brussels sprouts, chard, and lettuce are still to go in. We are still harvesting broc, cauliflower, spinach, cilantro, arugula, dill, parsley, chives, and salad mix out in the field for the farmers' markets. Our two tunnels are planted and growing well. We put row covers on for the first time last Saturday night in the tunnels, because of the threat of 20 degrees, but it happily never happened! Our two markets are on Saturday till April 30th and both are inside if we choose. Right now if temps hold we will stay outside with one of them because of too much product to haul inside. So far things look good for the winter market season.

UPCOMING EVENTS for details and more events see:
<http://www.uvm.edu/vtvegandberry/meetings/meetlist.html>.

Dec. 1. Extending the Season using Controlled and Modified Environment Agriculture, Albany NY. Topics include: supplemental lighting; green energy systems; structural considerations, cultural systems. Laura McDermott, 518-746-2562 or lgm4@cornell.edu

Dec. 10. GAPS Food Safety Workshop for Growers. White River Junction. Ginger Nickerson UVM-Extension Center for Sustainable Agriculture, 802-656-5490 or ginger.nickerson@uvm.edu.

Jan. 31. VT Vegetable and Berry Growers Assn. annual meeting, Montpelier. Stay tuned.

Feb. 12-14. NOFA-VT Winter Conference, UVM. 802-434-4122 or info@nofavt.org.