



Vermont Vegetable and Berry News – November 7, 2017

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www.uvm.edu/vtvegandberry

UPCOMING EVENTS

Dec. 12-14. New England Vegetable and Fruit Conference and Trade Show. Manchester NH.
<https://newenglandvfc.org/> Rooms in main hotel already sold out, nearby hotels are available.

Jan. 22, 2018. VVBGA Annual Meeting, Fairlee VT. Mark your calendars.

Feb. 18-20, 2018. NOFA-VT Winter Conference, Burlington VT.
<https://nofavt.org/35th-annual-winter-conference>

REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

(Fairfax) We fared well through the storm, only lost plastic on 2 greenhouses, they were almost due for replacement anyway. The generator held up well for the 4 days without power. Thinking of sizing up so I can run all my coolers at once. The weather was cool enough to use outside air to keep things in good shape. Lucky we didn't get all the rain and flooding. Root crops are harvesting well. Looking forward to dry weather this week to get the bulk of the carrots out. Cabbage keeps growing, even getting to harvest cabbage planted late, in early August.

(Huntington) The wind storm did no direct damage on our farm except for 4 days without grid power. Greenhouses and tunnels were fine, despite damage one valley over. I'm glad we have a generator large enough to run the whole farm since November is our busiest sales month and shutting down the wash barn is not an option.

We run a 25kW/50kW PTO generator which is ideal if you only have intermittent outages and worry about keeping a self-contained unit in good running condition. We hooked up a fairly thrifty 60hp tractor to it and burned 1.2 gal. of diesel per hour, though our compressor load is not as large as many farms' so your mileage may vary. I should probably install a Murphy switch on one tractor since it runs full-throttle unsupervised all day during outages, but somehow that never makes it up the priority list.

Local wholesale and winter CSA sales are strong. Not too optimistic about prices on the regional/national wholesale level with the changes to the NOP and increased regional produce supply. Makes one appreciate the great folks working in the local stores and in our local communities.

(Plainfield) This is a first, some blueberries blooming on November 2, with the leaves dying! I can find blossoms on a dozen of my young plants, 5 years old or so. My 14 year-old plants are not blooming. My wild strawberries are blooming as well. I think this warm weather is confusing them.

My biggest production worry is SWD. I have planted more early raspberries. I'm glad that most of my blueberries are early to mid-season. When I got surprised by SWD earlier this season the "shake, stomp, shuffle" routine worked reasonably well. I went around and shook the bushes so many of the soft berries fell off, then I stomped, squishing them down, and shuffled doing the twist and smushing them side to side.

At the same time, I hang traps on the bushes. I take a soldering iron and melt holes in the sides of red plastic Solo cups, then put some cider vinegar with a drop of dish soap in them. I hang them with strings through the top and put lids on them so they don't fill with rainwater. The SWD fly through the holes in the side of the cup. If I am lucky the bottom of the cup begins to look like a poppy seed muffin - filled with dead SWD. The end of August cold weather seemed to have killed off some SWD, and I have not seen any in my fall raspberries picked this past week.

(Elmore) Still harvesting hardy kiwis from our vines, preparing beds for seed for nut pines and paw paws. It has been a wet week but warm enough to relax in the fields. Many trees have not dropped their leaves yet so we are concerned they won't harden off properly before winter. Rain has washed out our roads somewhat but generally happy with a long fall season that gives us lush greens to harvest and really ripe apples with their sugars developed fully like they are supposed to but often don't get the chance.

(E. Montpelier) We came through the storm in decent shape. Wind tore the plastic off of one house. The other two are fine. Just closed them up and listened to the wind all night. Losing power did not help. Fortunately wind storms are covered by my insurance, wind damage is not? Go figure.

(Benson) We are only one week away from having all fall roots harvested and in storage. The season was good and we're looking forward to our two farmers' markets that will run all winter. Fall cover cropping is a bit behind with all the harvesting going on and rain at the wrong time but I plan to have everything covered in a week. Even though the November planted rye will not do much this fall and winter, it will establish roots to hold soil in place until spring growth.

Last year I spent \$600 on deer repellents and still lost about 2500 row feet of carrots. This year I spent less than \$20 and lost no carrots. Take 6 eggs, crack into 5-gallon pail and fill with water. Let sit for 1-2 weeks until very stinky. Spray on carrot tops. I have sprayed once per week, did not even set up my usual deer fencing and had almost no damage - even now in early November. I think this has been the highlight of the 2017 growing season for me.

(Orwell) We've finally completed our transition away from tomatoes into greens. The extended fall lured us into keeping tomato plants going longer than planned, and we also have annual amnesia about just how long it takes to remove tomato plants. It is tempting to toss them all in a dumpster or burn the whole pile, plastic and all but we can't stomach either idea. We've been using a plastic tape in place of clips for much of our trellising but removing the tape is a drag. We are hoping for a biodegradable version in the near future. While the storm knocked out our power for a day, we were amazed, and felt very lucky, to find minimal damage to our structures.

(Westminster West) All this rain, which resulted in quick growth, made me realize that I'm just not irrigating enough during the season! Drips keep the crops alive but I think it needs to run much longer. Lucked out from the wind storm here, had a door blow off a greenhouse but no other damage. Power was out 5 hours but generator kicked in; happy we put that in 8 years ago. The great fall weather has allowed the late-planted carrots, turnips and rutabagas to size up and now we're busy getting them harvested before really cold weather!

Did a successful pop-up market week after our farmers' market closed for the season but this weekend looks way too cold to deal with that. Picked a big crop of raspberries today from our greenhouses, almost latest pick ever, happy to stop after this however, so much other stuff to do!

Borrowed a subsoiler, been wanting to do this for decades! Might have to buy my own soon. Cover crops are lush and thick from all this nice rain; more rain than we had all summer! Sales are still good, and hope to finish by Thanksgiving and take a needed vacation. Planning next year while trying to finish this year, costs are up, labor mostly, trying to raise prices as much as possible without killing sales, a strange balance.

(Burlington) We were fortunate to miss out on the worst of the winds last weekend. It has been a great autumn for us to have an extended growing season. This was the first time in 25 years I've picked red peppers from the field in November. Our July 8th planting of potatoes replacing those we'd lost to a flood on July 2nd came out of the ground looking very nice, with pretty good yields. Interested to see how our first attempt at transplanted spinach performs for us in the winter tunnels.

Wondering if anyone has noticed Delicata squash to be particularly susceptible to Phytophthora, and if some strains are better than others. All of our other C. pepo squash are much more tolerant. Takeaways this year: indoor cucumbers are a winner provided we install insect netting on the rollup sidewalls.

Plant spacing really affects things (duh): where we had below target plant populations, we ended up with a much larger number of too-large, difficult-to-market crops in many different families. I need to plan an earlier harvest for those thinner stands of crops.

(Plainfield NH) Warm temperatures have made it a lot easier to function at this late point in the fall. Still lots of root crops in the ground, staking and pruning summer raspberries, blueberries left undone. Fall wholesale was strong, in part because of the availability of unfrosted Solanaceous crops so late. Sales of roots are still strong, but it's still obvious when the peppers and tomatoes finally stop adding to the sales.

The H2A crew head home tomorrow, reducing our field crew by 60%. That and the shortened days are going to prevent us getting all the things done that we had hoped to accomplish before groundfreeze, and finds us prioritizing what to do and what to let slide. A storage and pack shed is going up, and even though the labor is being contracted out, it still sucks some time out of regular activities of the remaining field crew. Our contractor had us pre-buy lumber at the first warning of Hurricane Harvey, a gamble that saved us a lot of money. Extensive hurricane damage in Texas and Puerto Rico has skyrocketed demand and in most cases doubled lumber prices and plywood may soon be a scarce commodity if available at all.

(Salisbury NH) Not a bad year overall but the slow cool wet spring gave us a late start. Only a few hardy things left in the field, spinach and lettuce in the hoop house are ready for picking. Tried watermelon radishes this fall but they didn't have time to size up. Working on a solution for row markers since permanent markers only seem permanent when on a white shirt. Very frustrating when you are trying to evaluate different varieties and can't read the tag. Rodents seem plentiful this year.

(Newburyport MA) Arrowhead Farm. Exceptional yield and quality for all autumn field crops. Turnips, radishes, daikon, onions, leeks all large size and completely clean. Watermelon radishes and salad turnips larger than softballs and superb eating qualities; only problem is we need to expand winter storage. Asian greens, arugula, broccoli raab, bekana, bok choy, bunching onions, and kale all lush, green, and clean.

Four winter greenhouses and three high tunnels planted with spinach, chard, Salanova, kale, Asian greens, celery, choy, Chinese cabbage, and lettuce are all well ahead of schedule. Three more tunnels still cranking out high quality cherry tomatoes will eventually be planted with arugula, vitamin green, and more spinach. Also planting a hundred 12" hanging baskets of pea shoot every week and hanging above greenhouse vegetables on drippers. Will heat these houses to thirty degrees night temp and vent at fifty-five degrees.

Winter farmers' market and CSA signups off to a slow start. Amazing weather--still harvesting great colored sweet peppers in the field. Not even a touch of frost yet!

(Argyle NY) We've had 3 light frosts but I believe this week will end the growing season. We will harvest cabbage and kohlrabi this week, which without the long fall wouldn't have matured. A bunch of us decided to not grow Brussels sprouts this year because of the gray aphids but they didn't show up. What do we do next year?

Still to do is to put up 3 smaller tunnels for: overwintering onions, December lettuce, and kale. The planted tunnels look good except they are a little overgrown but not bad like a few years ago. Some powdery mildew on the kale that I will spray Millstop and stylet oil combo to control. No downy on the spinach or lettuce yet. Markets are inside now and showing strength. Still low on winter growers to round out the market. Lots of opportunities for young farmers!

GIVE YOUR 2 CENTS ON FARM REGULATIONS

Farmers face regulation on a variety of topics. How do these regulations impact agriculture? How long does it take to comply and what does it cost? Are there strategies that could simplify regulatory frameworks? Are there ways to make compliance more efficient? Researchers at UVM want to hear from Vermont farmers about how much time and what kind of actions are required to comply with different regulations. This information may identify pathways for regulation changes and gives farmers a voice in expressing how regulations affect their farm. If you are interesting in sharing your perspective, please contact Dr. Meredith Niles at 802-656-4337 or mtniles@uvm.edu to schedule an interview. She will travel to your farm for convenience. All individual information will remain anonymous in the reporting of results. Farmers will be compensated with \$50 for their time. Interviews will begin in November 2017 and take place through the Winter of 2017.

NOFA COST OF PRODUCTION PROJECT

Over the past two years, three NOFA chapters- Vermont, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts- worked with 30 organic vegetable farmers to track and analyze the cost of production of vegetable crops commonly grown in the Northeast. The results from participating farms were aggregated on a per acre basis into five crop-specific fact sheets that present key metrics such as net income, average price/case, cultivation hours/acre, wash and pack hours/acre, and many other data points related to the production of winter squash, potatoes, onions, head lettuce, and carrots. Supplemental factsheets present crop profitability comparisons, whole farm financial ratios, and tips for success when undertaking cost of production analysis. Check out the factsheets at: www.nofavt.org/cost-of-production. Questions? Contact Jen Miller, NOFA-VT Farmer Services Coordinator, jen@nofavt.org.