



Vermont Vegetable and Berry News –April 15, 2013
Compiled by Vern Grubinger, University of Vermont Extension
(802) 257-7967 ext. 303, vernon.grubinger@uvm.edu
www.uvm.edu/vtvegandberry

REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

(Monkton) The garlic is up and the greenhouse is chugging along. Brassica and onion transplants are ready to go out this weekend, and I just seeded down one of our high tunnels with komatsu, pac choi, tatsoi, spinach, radishes and salad greens. My first attempt at running wobblers for irrigation in the high tunnel went smoothly. Other parts of the state are still reporting snow pack, but we've got green grass blades poking through and the bees have been active. They've been bringing pollen back to the hive, though we've been scratching our heads trying to figure out where they are going to get it.

(West Brookfield) The last of the overwintered spinach has been harvested and sold to make way for the new greens. Building raised beds in the main tunnel for the first time for better plant growth and less weed pressure. The mesclun in the first bed has germinated and looking great. The onion, hot pepper and cabbage starts look fantastic. Eager to get them in the ground. Garlic has sprouted and in some spots, through the remaining snow cover.

(Warren) Potatoes and carrots up in high tunnels. The usual early season heater, tractor and electrical problems are hopefully out of the way. Moving to wholesale this season and cutting way down on diversity. It feels really nice to focus on a few things. Hopefully I won't be trading income for labor the way I have in the past. I have revamped our wash house and put everything I can think of on caster wheels so it can always be in just the right place. After a winter of timing myself doing sorting and bagging I've managed to shave at least 25% off of most tasks. It's amazing how much time extra movement can add up to.

(Westfield) Hopefully by mid-week we will be able to pull the mulch of the strawberry so far it either mud or snow. The good side of this weather we are up to date for our work in the greenhouse: tomatoes are in and blooming, transplanted spinach and lettuce are growing well and bedding plant we are filling the 6 packs as soon as the seedling are ready.

(Leicester) It's been pretty dry here in spite of the few rains we have had recently. It's worked out nicely, and I have been able to prep some beds earlier than before. We'll be transplanting into the fields this week, Asian greens and broccoli, and maybe even some head lettuce. Finally starting a season feeling on schedule rather than behind.

(Dummerston) Temps are cold. The field is still wet. It won't be an early season for planting this year. I'll be putting up the electric deer fence today and hoping it works.

(Westminster West) Garlic field looking good. We had to fix some of the plastic mulch covers that blew off during a windy period this winter when the snow was gone; that has never happened before. Lots of repairs to do on the greenhouses and tunnels resulting from very high winds, much more than usual. Greenhouses stuffed with bedding plants and herbs awaiting the arrival of spring so sales can pick up and start to make room. Trying lots of grafted tomatoes for sale to home gardeners this year, maybe they are ready for it? Started plowing up some of the new fields that haven't been plowed in 30 plus years; always great to watch new sod plowed up! Farmers market starting here in 2 weeks, so much to get ready!

(Fairfax) While spring is slow coming, it sure makes it easier to keep on top of all the greenhouse work. Plant sales are just starting up. We're hoping for nice May weather. This is setting up as a good plant season in that April has been cold, which always fuels demand for plants once it does finally warm up. Maxim wood pellet boiler continues to run without a flaw.

(Grand Isle) What a joy! The hints of green are everywhere and the hardy bulbs pushing up through the cold ground. Our two year old strawberries fared much better than the one year old. Makes us think we must plant our new berries earlier in the spring so that there is more established growth as we go into winter. Part of the problem this year was the winter season when lots of mulch got blown off crowns into aisles and then the severe early spring winds without good snow cover. We finally have installed a PTO generator set up to power the whole farm in case of a power failure. We have five oil furnaces and four emergency heaters set up in greenhouses and caterpillars. All of them need power. If we should lose power some cold night instead of losing all the plants we can keep them and our house supplied with power. It is a Tremendous Relief! At this time of year, as we sit perched to dive into the new season, all the time tested phrases come to mind in the way that they apply so directly to farming. I will add a few of our favorites. Timing is everything; a stitch in time saves nine; a place for everything and everything in its place; hope springs eternal! We cannot give enough credit and respect to those faithful employees who return for another season of vegetable farming. Thus spring time reminds us that we must not take anything or anyone for granted.

(Abington CT) Strawberries are uncovered and looking healthy, garlic is up 6 inches and seems to have survived the winter just fine. I am looking into buying a sprayer from IVA in Lancaster County, they have a small 50 gallon 12 volt pump with 15' boom model that can be used with one or two animals. The ground clearance is 30" and the boom is on a winch and can be adjusted from 1' to 7' off the ground. I plan on using this for foliar feeding and to inoculate some new ground that I am remediating with Quantum Growth and Pseudomonas, it was GMO corn ground. First seeding is in the ground and under my new Typar fabric; they should be germinating any day now. Greenhouse is going well and I will harden off my onions next week for transplanting. I used the oxen to disc oat and pea debris into the ground to start decomposing; I was able to weight the disc down with myself because they drive from behind with lines.

(Plainfield NH) Field work proceeding slowly as weather has been less than good for growing; two inches of sleet on ground from recent storm. Late farm projects have gone well in the absence of good growing conditions. We replaced lean-to cold frames on 2 houses with a single greenhouse structure and constructed some portable greenhouse-based housing for our meat birds that can be moved about the fields on skids. We are going to experiment with running laying hens in our blueberries and raspberries post-harvest for weed seed and spent fruit clean up. We tried it a little late last fall and were amazed at what we found. Ornamental and vegetable greenhouses are going well, keeping a close eye on the thrips population as incoming plant material has had thrips on it and I harbored a pretty good population in some large overwintered rosemary plants. Although used spinosad and some endeavor once to spot-treat the rosemary, control has been achieved primarily through weekly applications throughout the houses with *Steinernema feltiae* (beneficial nematodes) and some *Orius* (minute pirate bug). Vigilance in scouting because grafted tomatoes could be exposed to INSV (impatiens necrotic spot virus) through vectoring by thrips. Planting greenhouses to tomatoes. Two weeks ago a furnace ignition likely coupled with a wind event resulted in a flash fire that burned up one of our houses. It's repaired and replanted but behind on the number of tomato plants needed. If the weather turns warm this week the anxiety levels will heighten.

MUMMYBERRY UPDATE

(Mary Conklin, Univ. of Connecticut Extension)

For blueberry growers, forsythia bloom is a good indicator of when to look for the mummy berry fungal cups that form from the mummified berries on the ground. This also lines up with the green tip bud stage of blueberries. Mummy berry, caused by the fungus *Monilinia vaccinii-*

corymbosi, is a two stage disease. The first stage is in the cool spring when the fungal spores move by wind and rain and infect new leaves and shoots. The next phase occurs when the fungus, carried by rain, pollinators and insects, moves to the flower and infects the newly forming berries. The berries shrivel before they ripen, take on a whitish appearance, and eventually drop to the ground. The following spring, mushroom-looking fungal cups sprout out of the mummified fruit and the cycle begins again. Rutgers considers 5 mummies per bush to indicate heavy disease pressure.

It is very difficult to nearly impossible to use raking or picking up all the berries on the ground as the sole management method. So, if you haven't already done so, apply at least a 3"-4" layer of wood chips/mulch to cover all mummified berries that fell from last season. In future years, try to have this mulch layer down well before the plants reach the green tip stage or before forsythia begins to bloom. Cultivation between the rows will help to bury mummies that are not normally covered with mulch. An application of 200 lbs/A of 50% urea, combined with the cultivation, helps to burn the cups. Fungicides, organic and non-organic, are available to control both stages of mummy berry. The first application goes on at this time. Organic choices include Actinovate and Serenade Max. Non-organic choices include Abound (read the label carefully if you also grow apples), Bravo Ultrex, Captec, Indar, Orbit, Pristine, Quash (this has a supplemental label that you need to have and can get from your rep or on-line at www.cdms.net) and Switch.

UPDATE FROM THE UVM PLANT DIAGNOSTIC CLINIC (Ann Hazelrigg)

Gabriella Maia has recently joined the lab; she has her MS degree in plant pathology from University of Florida and has worked on cucurbit powdery mildew. We have seen crown mites, green peach aphids and downy mildew in high tunnel spinach lately. Spinach crown mites are difficult to see since they burrow down into the crown where there is moisture. They are pearly white and shiny. They tend to prefer soils high in organic matter and cool, wet conditions, see: <http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/r732400111.html>. Aphids can be tricky to ID. You have to look at a few body parts, especially the area between the antennae, to figure out which one it is. A positive ID is important especially if you are going to manage with beneficials.

Green peach aphid is common pest in tunnels and greenhouses, as it feeds on many vegetables and ornamentals. It is small and can vary greatly in color from dark green to pink. It has red eyes. Generally aphids give birth to living young throughout the year but in cold climates they may overwinter as eggs, which are black and shiny.

The nymphs are the immature stage, and look similar to the adults but smaller and always wingless; adults can be with or without wings. Aphids have a stylet to suck up plant sap, and this can transmit plant viruses, which can quickly spread throughout a crop. Several biological control options are available to manage this species of aphid, including lady beetles, lacewings, predatory flies (*Aphidoletes* sp.) and parasitic wasps (*Aphidius* sp.) Early detection is key to managing aphids in greenhouses, see:

<http://extension.umass.edu/floriculture/fact-sheets/aphids-greenhouse-crops>.