

Vermont Vegetable and Berry News – April 20, 2010

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APRIL BERRY CHECKLIST

Adapted from the NY Berry news article by Cathy Heidenreich, Cornell University

(<http://www.nysaes.cornell.edu/pp/extension/tfabp/newslett.shtml>)

Frost Alert! The heat wave that blanketed us in late March/early April has pushed the clock ahead in terms of small fruit growth and development, but frost free dates for much of the state are still a month away. Have your frost protection ready. For details on blueberry frost protection see

<http://web1.msue.msu.edu/vanburen/bbsprink.htm>, for strawberry frost protection details see:

http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/crops/facts/frosprot_straw.htm

Established berries: Pruning should be mostly finished by now for all berry crops. Finely chop brush in place or remove and burn it. Check irrigation system for problems and/or leaks. Examine trellis and fencing, make adjustments or repairs. Check sprayer for worn nozzles and replace as needed, do calibrations. Review last year's records for problem pests, pest locations and effectiveness of your pest management program. Check product labels for efficacy against target pests and order products as needed. For pesticide options see <http://ipmguidelines.org/BerryCrops/default.asp> produced by Cornell, the revised New England small fruit guide will be available soon.

New berry plantings: If you still need to order plants check the Cornell nursery guide for sources:

<http://www.fruit.cornell.edu/Berries/nurseries/index.html>. Select a shipping date for plants so you can plant as soon as the soil can normally be worked and danger of frost is past. Amend soil based on soil test results; incorporate amendments at least 8" deep prior to planting.

Established strawberries: Prepare for frost control; conduct spring weed control; treat for leaf spot diseases early in the season where leaf disease was pressure was high the previous growing season.

New strawberry plantings: Check plants on arrival to be sure they are in good condition; moisten as necessary. Keep dormant runner plants in cold storage (30-32 degrees) in plastic bags if they cannot be planted immediately. Conduct preplant weed management. Build raised beds if desired; 8-10" high by 24" wide. Lay out the field prior to planting day. Stake rows with wire flags. Check your row spacing to allow for easy equipment movement and access later on: use in-row spacing for matted rows of 18-24" with between-row spacing of 48-52", depending on equipment size.

If using biodegradable mulch, lay 1-2 days prior to planting. Apply at slightly looser tension than conventional plastics. Do not apply at temperatures above 80 degrees. If you use a mechanical planter, have it tuned up and ready to go. Place roots in water ½ to 1 hour before planting. Keep plants moist during the planting process. Plants should be set with the center of the crown level with the soil surface. Check depth after planting; firm soil around plants. Irrigate immediately to settle soil around roots and reduce transplant shock.

Established blueberries: Take precautions to minimize early spring frost damage. The time for delayed dormant (as leaf buds begin to break) applications of lime sulfur or copper for problem locations may be passed in many areas of the state. Do not apply sulfur within 2 weeks of an oil spray or when temperatures are above 75 degrees. If you had scale insects last season apply an oil spray, with thorough coverage, during bud swell (after bud scales start to expand, but before first leaf stands out from clusters).

New blueberry plantings: Two-year old bare root or potted plants are generally the best buy. Potted plants are more expensive than bare-rooted plants but they tend to establish more quickly. If potted plants are used, check to see if they are pot bound. If so, the root ball should be cut before planting to ensure good root spread and branching. Remove the plant from the pot and lay on its side. Cut through the root ball perimeter 4-6 times, rotating the plant between each cut. Firm soil around the plants. Check plants on arrival to be sure they are in good condition; moisten as necessary. Keep bare-rooted plants in cold storage (30-32 degrees) in plastic bags if they cannot be planted immediately. Containerized plants may be kept out doors until planting; keep well watered.

Conduct preplant weed management. Layout planting, flag rows. Plant spacing should be 4-5' in-row and 10' between rows. PYO rows should be 200' or less in length. Wait to plant until severe freeze danger has past. Saturate peat bales and allow them to soak several days before planting. Moisten roots ½ to 1 hour before planting. Planting holes need to be more wide than deep, to allow the roots to be spread out at planting. Incorporate approx 1 gal. peat moss into planting hole soil and back fill with the soil/peat mixture. Set plants at the same depth they were planted at in the nursery. Fill hole with peat soil mix. Firm soil around plants. Irrigate immediately after planting (1" water) to settle soil around roots. Mulch with wood chips, sawdust or other materials. Remove at least 1/3 of top growth of newly set plant and rub off any flower buds to promote establishment and reduce transplant shock. Plant sod alleys or clean cultivate between rows.

Established raspberries: conduct spring weed control. Make delayed dormant application of lime sulfur or copper in plantings with a history of cane disease. Applications should be made on a calm day with sufficient water to soak canes completely. Sprays applied after ½" green tip may burn leaves, particularly in warm weather. A delayed dormant application is not necessary for fall-bearing raspberries if last year's canes were mowed and removed or thoroughly shredded.

New red raspberry plantings: Check plants on arrival to be sure they are in good condition; moisten as necessary. Keep dormant canes at 35 degrees in plastic bags if canes cannot be planted immediately. Conduct preplant weed management. Layout planting, flag rows, plow a very shallow furrow setting dormant canes, root cuttings or plug plants into. Plant spacing should be 2-3' in-row with 9-10' between rows. Cultivars that sucker vigorously should be set at the 3' spacing; those that produce fewer suckers should be set at the 2' spacing.

Do not allow dormant cane roots to dry out before planting. Set at same depth as canes were set in the nursery. Be sure plants are set vertically and not at an angle for best growth. Prune back to a height of 5" immediately. Prune back to soil level after new shoots emerge from soil. Delay planting of tissue culture plug plants until all danger of spring frost is past. Apply water to transplant holes. Cover the top of the root ball with field soil to a depth of ¾ inch. Firm soil around plug plant.

Avoid herbicide applications or soil disturbances. After planting, a light layer of straw mulch will help reduce weeds and retain moisture. Remember mulch is applied the planting year only. Irrigate immediately after planting. Plant sod alleys or clean cultivate between rows.

PESTICIDE RULES REFRESHER FOR ALL GROWERS

By Annie Macmillan, Vermont Agency of Agriculture

The Worker Protection Standard (WPS), a Federal regulation that has been in effect since 1995, applies to all commercial growers that use any pesticides--organic or conventional--in the production of agricultural plants on farms, nurseries, and greenhouses.

Commercial farms may only use agriculturally-labeled pesticides. Homeowner products (garden labeled) may not be used in a commercial operation. You will know that a product is labeled for agricultural use because it will include WPS information under the AGRICULTURAL USE REQUIREMENTS statement in the Directions for Use section of the pesticide label. Furthermore, it is illegal to use any pesticide product that has not been registered by the Vermont Agency of Agriculture. Please visit <https://www.usaplants.vt.gov/ProductRegFSA/BrandSearch.aspx> or call Annie Macmillan at 802-828-3479 to verify whether a product has been registered.

Organic growers note: even if organic pesticides are approved by OMRI or VOF, they cannot be used on commercial organic farms with employees unless the label includes the Agricultural Use Requirement.

All employees on commercial farms must be trained to understand the WPS. There are two types of employees with regard to WPS on a farm: Handlers and Workers. Handlers are the people that prepare and/or apply agricultural pesticides, organic or otherwise. Handling tasks include mixing, loading, transferring, or applying pesticides; handling opened containers of pesticides; and cleaning, handling, repairing mixing, loading, or application equipment that may contain pesticide residue. Handlers must complete a training approved by the VT Agency of Agriculture after which they receive a Handler Card that is good for five years.

Workers are those given any type of compensation for harvesting, weeding, watering, etc. related to the production of agricultural plants. Workers need to be trained prior to entering a field that has been treated with any pesticide within the past 30 days. A Handler may train Workers employed on the same farm, or a farmer with a Pesticide Applicator Certificate may train their own Workers.

If you are the owner of a farm, and you or members of your family do all the work there, you are a "WPS employer." That means you must comply with some of the requirements of WPS, such as following pesticide label instructions about restricted entry intervals (REI) and personal protective equipment (PPE), and all other specific requirements listed on the label. However, in this case you are exempt from other WPS requirements such as posting pesticide application information at a central location, giving pesticide safety training to workers, providing decontamination supplies, posting emergency assistance information, and specific care and use of personal protective equipment. Despite this exemption, it is still a good idea to do most of these things.

Agency of Agriculture inspectors will be visiting organic fruit, vegetable, greenhouse and nursery operations routinely during the growing season to make sure that those applying pesticides are in compliance with the WPS. The Agency will also conduct Handler training as part of our 2010 Summer Workshop Series with Anne Macmillan and area field agents of the Agency of Agriculture. Please keep a look out for this workshop that will help you be in compliance when the State visits your farm this season. Group trainings for farmers can also be arranged by request. Please contact Annie Macmillan at 828-3479, or Anne.Macmillan@state.vt.us.

RASPBERRY PATCH COOKBOOK ON SALE

Author and small fruit grower Scott Mackenzie of E. Dorset is cleaning house; his cookbook with 365 raspberry recipes is available for just \$5 a copy, minimum of 10 books (retail normally \$12.95). The spiral-bound cookbook features bright red raspberries on the cover and recipes for beverages, salads, soups and baked goods of all kinds. Send checks payable to UVM Extension, to 11 University Way, Brattleboro VT 05301. Shipping is included.