



Vermont Vegetable and Berry News – June 19, 2012
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REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

(Plainfield) Excellent early strawberry picking, for wholesale and PYO. Cavendish remains the winner for length of season with reasonable sized fruit. Irrigating now to keep them coming. Maybe 5 more days of picking. Spraying Entrust on CPB, SCB, and flea beetles. Good weather for cultivation and stale seed beds. Demand for greens at farmers' markets continues strong.

(Brandon) Great stretch of weather for strawberries. Solid yields and clean fruit made folks on both sides of the register happy. Earliest fruit left under row cover too long suffered in size, but subsequent pickings became much nicer. Late fruit is not going by, hot days ahead hopefully will be balanced by irrigation the past two days. I echo comments from Grand Isle regarding the value of netting over berries. Easy to deal with, and complete protection from waxwings, a pest that had been building the last few years. Most other crops growing well. Sweet corn from transplants is silking and has great dark color. Looking to early July harvest to keep bringing folks into stand after the berries. Greenhouse crops have few pests, though needed a Bt spray to check rampant growth of hornworms on tomatoes.

(Royalton) Strawberries are in full swing, a little mold due to rain, but this dry weather has really helped them along. We still have rhubarb, so it's a nice combination. Potato beetles are out in force, some egg clusters. Garlic scapes are ready to harvest. Snap peas are full on, and cabbages are ready. Tomatoes in the field are setting good fruit already. Galinsoga is also happy, but able to get after it because of the dry spell. Mustard cover crop coming in nicely.

(Monkton) For the first time in 30 years growing strawberries the season will be over before the summer solstice! Still, the berries were excellent and pickers were eager. We will be pulling garlic before July. If we can just get everything watered enough to survive the heat we can enjoy how different this year is from last.

(Grand Isle) We have been picking strawberries like mad in anticipation of the 90 degree plus days forecast for later this week. The early and mid-season berry varieties are at or past peak but the late varieties (Idea and Record) are still showing lots of unripe berries. It is nice to stretch the season with different varieties. The only reason we have any strawberries this year is because we invested in netting. For \$1600 we covered an acre and feel the price was worth it. That was in response to visit by the largest flock of cedar wax wings we have ever seen here. We did not even bother to get out our usual collection of shiny mylar tape, bird scare recordings, techno music, rubber snakes, and wind pin wheels. Instead we went straight to the netting purchase and it made all the difference. The daily ritual of uncovering the net for PYO customers followed by recovering took time but was relatively easy. Early vegetables are looking good with the exception of blotchy leaves on the Socrates greenhouse cucumbers. We could use some rain.

(Plainfield NH) Strawberry season in full swing, picture perfect weather made for strong PYO. Cabots are maturing with Annapolis so it promises to be a short season despite the so far cool nights. Leafhoppers arrived on some varieties of beans but not others, but all over all the lettuce. SCB is around but not a huge problem yet. Bedding plant sales were strong; demand best since 2008. Finishing planting of sweet corn and second transplants of cherry tomato and peppers in field. The investment/upgrade to a Jang seeder for raw small seeded veg crops was a real step up from our old #4 Planet Jr. Cedar waxwing pressure is light so far, dealing with deer, also known as rats with antlers. Didn't think hiring people full time to maintain deer fence was part of farming, but it's our reality. Greenhouse tomatoes showing a bit of leaf mold but good weather inhibiting its development. Weather has been kind to potatoes, which look best ever.

(Woodbury) It's dry here. We are well drained, and there's some moisture for the crops that have been around for a while, but it's time to water. Plant sales are winding down, but having replacement plants at this time of the year is both great for us and those who are having trouble in the garden; woodchucks, bugs, etc. We had record sales this year for plants; it's great to have people growing their own food. Weeds are doing well, but they are largely under control, and have no chance in this weather once we disturb them. Flea beetles continue to be intense, and cuke beetles are wrecking greenhouse cukes. Winter squash is covered in the field, so it's OK. I did see squash bugs in the greenhouse, which makes me nervous.

(Montpelier) From the field/kitchen: Two CSA deliveries are away and things are going well but always a few hiccups when you try to accommodate special requests for 210 members. Still a very steep learning curve. Gearing up for fall/winter value added sales trying to build inventory for it.

As for produce we are ahead of schedule on most things and dealing with June doldrums where cash flow is concerned waiting for all the longer crops to come in. Broccoli is at button stage, harvested cukes last week, tomatoes are showing color and we should be into them in two weeks. Last of the big plantings went in a bit late but they should be ok. Crazy but so far few cucumber beetles on greenhouse cukes or summer and winter squash. Plenty of other pests to contend with including raccoons. Canning tomatoes are in the new tunnel and look great with heavy fruit load. Farmer's market has been decent crowds a little thinner than last year and sales are down. A bit of lettuce saturation at the market.

(Londonderry) The sun is very welcome; our mountain soil has had a hard time drying out this spring. Still trying to get on a traditionally wet field. We have had a number of Eastern Comma Butterfly on our hops for the first time. They prefer to eat the nettles though and I have been told they are good luck. Not sure about that, but I have not seen them since planting hops 12 years ago! Many slugs and snails, still-cold nights and damp mornings leading to some rot on lettuce; going back to salad mix. Strawberries in the second week. Blueberries coming right around the corner. All berries doing well, large and thick set. Very excited; the last two years the flowers were frosted and we had low yields. We have had a very low set in tree fruit however. Summer Crisp pears did well, Liberty apples OK, Mutzu and RI Greening no fruit. Erecting 20x80 NRCS EQIP program tunnel over raspberries soon for fall season extension.

(Wolcott) Too dry this year in all of our fields and our pots. Even though it rained a lot in May looks like it will be a small harvest from fruit trees but a larger than normal berry crop in blueberries, gooseberries, grapes, raspberries and currants. I guess this is another good reason for diversification. We are watering every day and our forest and field streams are low.

(Benson) Warm nights with right amount of rain makes good growing weather. It is rare that I am content with the way everything looks out there but I am having one of those moments today. Very little insect pressure, weeds mostly all killed and cover cropping for fall soil prep on schedule. We'll be doing earthmoving for a high tunnel installation and it seems as if I will actually have the time to get this project going before fall. Summer crop production looks good which means I can spend more time on fall planning.

(Burlington) Off to a great start. We close our 2012 strawberry season on June 18. With cedar waxwing problems for the first time, we'll order bird netting for 2013. Managed to get by with a large row cover this year; the extra heat and moisture were less bad than the birds. CSA members are happy with lots of cucurbit and other summer crops coming in early.

Our zone-till trial of butternut in rolled winter rye is now 3 weeks in. Rye did not die according to the roller-crimper plan. Then I wondered why half of the squash transplants were missing. It looked like they'd been sidedressed with peanut meal, but I knew we hadn't and besides it's never burned anything before. Took until I was moving pipe around all day Friday to figure out that our field is teeming with what I presume to be Armyworms. Maybe the squash is just collateral damage in the quest for one of their favored crops: cereal rye.

(Highgate) We spotted first CPB adults June 15. We are doing daily scouting and squashing of adults and egg masses. So far no larvae have been found. Still a small amount of adults.

(Proctorsville) We haven't had to water due to earlier consistent rain; soil is still moist under the top dry layer. Flea beetles and aphids were a problem on the tomatoes, but with a combination of smushing, spraying, and interplanting dill, the pests are less. Potato beetles are a concern on the Fingerlings which are new to our farm this year. They're less on the other potato varieties. Powdery mildew is on some cucurbits, being combated with a light sulfur spray. Late frost appears to have damaged first plantings of basil and spinach so they have been replanted. Greenhouse carrots were a huge hit for our CSA members as were early radishes.

(Weare NH) Just removed all row covers in anticipation of the heat. Hope to head off some bolting. Potatoes not looking happy, but everything else which includes garlic tomatoes, peas beans, kale is coming along. Raised beds in new field filling up quickly with successive plantings, already harvested quite a bit from them. Trying to wrap up irrigation for anticipated dry spell.

(Argyle NY) Rainy stretch ended and we're irrigating again. A new 34x144 high tunnel is producing arugula, spinach, and herbs. Amazed at how well spinach does in tunnels. From other summer tunnel just started picking summer squash, cucumbers and basil; tomatoes and beans looking good. Had lots of slugs, but Sluggo fixed them nicely; flea beetles have waned some; thrips were in early spring onions, but now have nice 3 to 4 inch bulbs from overwintered Forum and Bridger plants transplanted into a low tunnel in December. Still looking for a few interns to help but we have a great crew now. First large beets will be harvested this week, and carrots (seeded March 23!) will be ready soon.

(Enfield NH) Summer squash about to produce, zucchini a bit behind. Chard, kale and lettuce doing well, been shipping for 2-3 weeks. Peppers starting to form, eggplant about to flower. Potatoes did not come up well, I think we planted too soon after cutting; it was late enough that soils had warmed, so do not think that was the problem. Parsnips look great; the wet weather helped germination. Woodchuck hitting the Brussels sprouts and few other crops hard.

Crabgrass is healthy, but having better weed control than past years with new walk-behind flame weeder and cultivating tractor plus a lot of weeding by the crew.

(Hampton NY) Yellow squash and zucchini are blooming like mad and lots of small fruit. One plant with downy mildew. Burpless cucumbers have small fruit and are ahead of the slicers by about 2 weeks, which coincides with the transplant date. Swiss Chard producing well and is quite tasty. Spinach is over and 2nd sowing isn't doing well. Green and purple string Beans up and doing well. Acorn squash isn't looking well, but was planted in the low spot on landscape cloth. Butternut and Blue Hubbard are doing OK but later transplants showings stress (just wait until the heat!) Soaker hoses laid in anticipation of the heat wave. Cucumber beetles thriving; same with the squash beetles. Popcorn starting to recover from the shock of transplanting; it got way ahead of us and was over a foot tall.

LATE BLIGHT UPDATE

Late blight has been confirmed in nearby states but not yet in VT. Please be sure to send samples of any suspect plants up to the UVM Plant Diagnostic Clinic for positive identification so we can all be aware if it arrives, <http://pss.uvm.edu/pd/pdc/>. Scout often for the very first sign of the disease and then keep potato/tomato protected with weekly sprays. Familiarize your workers with the disease so they can be on the lookout, too. Hot dry weather is good for reducing disease spread; if we head into wet cooler period then spraying preventatively even before seeing the disease makes more sense. Here are links to images of the disease: http://www.longislandhort.cornell.edu/vegpath/photos/lateblight_tomato.htm and http://www.longislandhort.cornell.edu/vegpath/photos/lateblight_potato.htm. Copper is the material of choice to protect healthy foliage for organic growers. The two copper fungicides that are OMRI listed and registered in VT are Champ WG and NuCop 50WP. Conventional growers can use several fungicide groups, and should rotate among them, see the NE Vegetable management guide: <http://nevegetable.org/index.php/crops/potato?start=4> and <http://nevegetable.org/index.php/crops/tomato-outdoor?start=4>.

FROM THE UVM PLANT DIAGNOSTIC CLINIC – Ann Hazelrigg

Saw damage on stems in field cucumbers from earlier cucumber beetle feeding causing stunting and poor growth. In the same field was a fair amount of crown rot, perhaps fungal infection was initiated earlier when soils were cold and wet. Plants were growing out of injury.

Bacterial wilt in greenhouse cucumbers found. Symptoms include rapid wilting of plants. If you suspect the disease and have had cucumber beetles, try the visual diagnostic test of cutting the stem and waiting a few seconds, putting the stem back together and pull apart slowly. If a lot of bacteria are in the stem, you will see clear strings between the 2 cut surfaces. Sometimes it's easy to see, other times not. For positive ID have me look at the stems under the microscope. http://vegetablemendonline.ppath.cornell.edu/factsheets/Cucurbit_Beetles.htm.

Magnesium deficiency suspected in greenhouse cukes. Lots of interveinal necrosis on one variety. Grower is trying epsom salts and reporting back while I put the leaf in a moist chamber to see if disease sporulation occurs. Greenhouse tomatoes seen with scorching of leaves; browning on edges and some interveinal browning. The foliage above and below the affected leaves was ok. Usually when only one age of tissue is affected the cause is something abiotic or non-infectious. I suspect the plant got too dry while that set of leaves was coming out. If a lot of ages of leaves were affected and new growth did not look OK I would definitely check for bacterial canker issues or root problems. Four lined plant bug injury seen on mints, basil. This little bug causes angular leaf spots on basil and mints that look more like a disease than insect damage. It moves fast and is hard to catch; has 4 black lines with yellow or green in between. <http://www.extension.umn.edu/yardandgarden/ygbriefs/e121plantbugs-fourlined.html>
Slugs and snails rampant in fields and gardens. Armyworm damage is high in some areas of NY and north/west Vermont, see <http://pss.uvm.edu/vtcrops/?Page=articles/armyworm07.html>

UPCOMING EVENTS

June 26: Year Round Production at Pleasant Valley Farm, Argyle NY. July 9: Growing Great Garlic. High Meadows Farm, Westminster West VT. Almost 20 workshops planned in the area this season, see: <http://www.uvm.edu/vtvegandberry/meetings/meetlist.html>.