



Vermont Vegetable and Berry News –June 3, 2013
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REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

(Huntington) We fared better than many with last week's rains; only 5.5 inches in 8 days with no torrents, but that was enough to leach a lot of nutrients away from high density spinach plantings on light soil. Hopefully they'll perk up after a top dressing. Winter squash that was transplanted just before the cold spell was covered with pro-19 weight (0.56oz/sq.yd.) row cover, but a half a bed was omitted due to a tear in the fabric. The naked squash is looking far better than its covered counterparts, despite a night of very light frost on the field's perimeter and three nights in the 30's. Looks like we'll be moving towards using Surround for cucumber beetle control on young squash transplants in the future, as the cold, wet, row-cover was not kind to the existing foliage, and reserve the row-cover for use only on frosty nights. Onions on silver mulch are painfully slow to get going this time of year. A bit behind on field prep overall, but should be caught up by the end of this week's dry, sunny pattern.

(Cambridge) We went from drought to floods last week and got hammered by rain. So far the field crops don't look too bad and the perennials are loving it. Fruit set is beautiful in everything this spring: blueberries, plums, currants, cherries. Now I need to prepare for battle with plum curculio, chipmunks, groundhogs and SWD. I haven't had SWD yet but am setting up some traps soon. Anyone who has had some success for dealing with it organically, please share.

(Sudbury) This has been an interesting few weeks with little rain and then torrential downpours and, of course, frosty temperatures; gotta love Vermont. Many of my warm season plants were happy that I kept them in the greenhouse a little longer this year; maybe we're learning a little about 'North Country' farming? Tomatoes are now all in and peppers, eggplants, and basil will go in this week. Much of our recent time has been spent on expanding black mulch this year and installing a new drip irrigation system as we have finally tired of hauling hoses around. We are hopeful this will not only improve efficiency but will improve yields and make life a little easier for these older farmers!

(Plainfield NH) Rain, snow and now 90 degree heat; beats tornadoes, I guess. Flea beetles are a problem for all of us, and transplanting with rowcovers and wild temp fluctuations has been challenging, although everything except eggplant seems to be tolerating the heat well. However they were in the ground and covered 10 days before the snows of winter returned.

Strawberries are past full bloom and this heat will hustle the crop along, I am hoping the fruit is too small at this point to sunscald as we haven't been trying to evaporatively cool. Lots of winter-kill in the blueberries so we are devoting a lot of time to them improving mulch and weed control. Raspberry crop is OK, at least until the SWD makes its appearance. Biggest concern here is uncovered basil under remay. It had been under row cover for over two weeks, so I am sure there was some temp stress, but I am seeing symptoms that look a little bit like downy mildew. Will know a lot more in the next few days. I hope the 2013 basil season isn't over for us.

(Abington CT) The much needed rain has brought wonderful new growth to the crops. Flea beetles have caused some damage to greens, but tiny slugs have devastated the Tokyo Bekena. Row cover helps and I will avoid the Bekena until I have better slug control. Imported cabbage worms and loopers are already out and causing damage on the small amount of broccoli and kale that I couldn't cover, they are few enough plants that hand picking is easy. Working with draft horses and oxen have been very enjoyable and easy on the ground, the compaction is so much less where I have used only animals. So far tractor use has been limited to transplanting and heavier disc. Our new Iva sprayer arrives tomorrow, we look forward to using Quantum Growth for the remediation of a couple acres of old corn ground, the soil seems dead and microbes and a cover crop should help prep it for future vegetables.

(Shaftsbury) The cold set some things back and took out some melons under remay. There is a slight yellowish green cast to a lot of crops; hoping some hot/drier weather might change that. Sprayed Serenade on strawberry blooms; this seems to be the year to test if that works against strawberry Botrytis later in this month. A few red fruit on berries, and waxwings just arrived. Bought a Penn's Creek boom sprayer this season to replace my 15 year old mist blower. It is really nice! The 300 gallon tank is a bit big for our scale, but a good design, easy to use and calibrate, and best of all the agitator in the tank is "like turbo charged" so it can mix Surround and other powders right in the tank and no pre-mixing seems necessary. Plant sales have been good when the weather cooperates, not so good when the high is 45 degrees and it's raining.

(Enfield NH) Early brassicas getting hammered by flea beetles, spraying but not enough, may till early arugula and radish and salad turnip under. Lots of root maggot as well. Lettuce looks great, chard and spinach coming in but slower than expected. Garlic and onions look great. Pretty wet here right now.

(Cabot) The 5 inches of rain we've had in the last week making field prep difficult. Heat was great though. Things are growing. I love pelleted parsnip seed.

(Weare NH) Tunnel is full of tomatoes, eggplants and cukes; still working bugs out of irrigation. Transplanting almost finished until fall crops go in. Tried out a straw chopper this past weekend for mulching in between rows, jury is still out on that exercise. Reseeding root crops that never germinated on first round. Growth seems to be a bit behind the past few seasons, except for the weeds. Will be bringing less variety to the first farmers market than I would like, but hopefully the following weeks will see that increase to a more reasonable level.

(S. Royalton) We grow lots of vegetable plants to sell to gardeners. This weather has really thrown off sales since our biggest outlet is Saturday farmers' market and a few days of weekend sales at the farm. People just are not inspired to plant tomatoes when they just had 3 inches of snow at home. A number of our tomato plants really hated being out at the market and looked as if they had been frosted the next day even though they had been protected overnight. June 1st sales were quite strong, but severe weather threats put a damper on sales Sunday. In the field our early lettuce plantings really did not size up well and our first cauliflower buttoned up. But our plum trees made it thru the cold May nights even though they were in full bloom. Lots of fruit set.

(Barton) Having a hard time getting planted this year. Everytime we're almost dry enough we get rained or worse yet snowed out. Asparagus took a while to get started because of the dry weather now it is coming in OK. All our starts did well except for basil which got frostbite when we planted it just before the storm. Tomatoes and eggplant are in the greenhouse and our cool weather crops are doing just fine except that spinach and bok choy want to bolt because of the massive heat wave that hit after the snow. This is the second year in a row I planted asparagus and had a monsoon hit the next day which washed it out of the trenches and down the road.

(Williamsville) Finally finished up transplanting all the tomatoes and peppers. I still agonize over removing the hoop house spring plantings to make way for the hot summer crops. Still need to liquidate 2 spinach beds to open up space for the eggplant. All squash, cukes, melons are in after a brutal solo transplanting job. I sprayed them with Pyganic while in the 36 cell flats to knock back the cucumber beetles. Flea beetles hammering field radishes, turnips, mesclun, bok choy. Lambs quarter coming on strong. Time to catch up with weeding and mowing

(Westminster West) Cuke beetles arrived yesterday on both tunnel squash and cuke plants. Also saw mating squash bugs already; they don't waste time! We are trying out a field of white plastic mulch for the onion crop; so far looks good but won't really know until harvest time. I always forget how much work it is to get a new field ready to plant when it's an old hay field.

I have been eyeing one field for a long time and went for it; finally will be ready to build beds and mulch tomorrow, then we will set out 4500 plugs of winter squash. Feels good to shift gears from the greenhouses out to the fields this time of year and the staff looks forward to it.

(New Haven) Fields are wet, recent storm did not help. Planting is still in progress but by hand. Roots, sweet corn, tomatoes and peppers doing well.

(Barnet) We're finally getting the last of the transplants in while keeping a wary eye on the nightly temps. Market and farm stand sales are improving as customers are racing to get gardens in and replace frosted transplants that they purchased last week. This year the moving tunnel is really showing its advantage. The tomatoes are skinny and struggling in our old tunnels, but in the moving tunnel the tomatoes are unstoppable. Strawberries in the moving tunnel are neck and neck with the ones in the field so we won't bother with that experiment again. Sales of plants have been excellent this year although not so much at our farmers' market. Evidently, every new farm has read that growing starts is a quick way to success so there are numerous vendors with some starts to peddle. All this does affect our bottom line and we need to reevaluate our marketing plans at the farmers' market.

(Burlington) I am liking the plant density on beets using our new (to us) Stanhay seeder and pelleted seed. Tried it last year with naked beet seed and lousy results, but the pellets have upped the precision nicely, and appear to have led to stands that are neither too thick nor too sparse. Seeing quite a bit of early insect pressure, though I am hoping that the Swede midge are inexplicably late in our Brassicas. Will be working on a few more organic Swede midge control trials this summer, investigating the reputed systemic action of neem products and stimulating plant defense responses. Hoping to stay ahead of the little buggers with a good rotation as well.

(Salisbury NH) A week of rainy cool weather, then snow. We hauled flats of eggplant, peppers, from the unheated hoop house back to our house. Then two days of almost 100 degrees. Held off putting transplants in the ground as we felt they would just get fried. Waiting for shade cloth to arrive. Spinach in hoop house just about to bolt; pulled it up for chickens. Nelson carrots planted 3/16 are absolutely fabulous. Too good to sell! Crunchy and sweet. Potatoes are all up. Leeks and onions happy with all the rain. Provider stringbeans that had barely sprouted before snow survived and look great. Carrots and beets planted right before week of rain all sprouted. Already beginning to feel behind. Bugs galore: Colorado potato beetles, stink bugs, tortoise beetle, striped cucumber beetle, and tons of asparagus beetles.