



Vermont Vegetable and Berry News – June 30, 2015
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REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

(Montpelier) Deer herd is doing extremely well this year. Not a flea beetle in sight. Symplans appear to be in remission and I will get tomatoes out of that house for the first time in 2 years!

(Hinesburg) Season has been a challenge. Cool wet April, hot dry May, very wet June (about 14 inches the past couple weeks). Feeling a bit lucky that my fields are sloped and some are rather sandy, but the lower parts of the heavier fields are not looking good. Certainly not 2014 for us. General issues are nutrient leaching in all fields, poor germination (first in the drier fields in May, now in the wetter fields in June) of succession crops. Winter squash look good as do potatoes (not too many CPBs, we rotate over large distances...I think that helps), flea beetles kept under control with floating row covers, but their pressure does not seem too bad this year. High tunnel tomatoes looking healthy for now (keeping fingers crossed with all this cool damp weather), thankful for diversification this year.

(Wolcott) We've been harvesting parthenocarpic zucchini and cucumbers from one of our high tunnels for a month now, they are amazing plants, cuke vines over 7' now and really putting out. The garlic looks great, harvesting nice new potatoes, and other usual seasonal crops, the rainy weather, especially on Sundays when we a farmers market has put a huge damper on our income. Even wholesale accounts haven't been strong, yet. Looking forward to a sunnier and dryer July and to sell this wonderful bounty!

(Shrewsbury) All the rain has caused some leaf spot on parsley and beet greens, but I'm glad to see that onions and leeks look healthy with no signs of disease. Black rot showing up on Brussels sprouts and summer cabbage has finally convinced me to start hot water treating seeds for next year. We had a beautiful stand of oats and peas that we recently flail mowed, chisel plowed, and rototilled, ready to transplant fall cabbage and broccoli. We're starting to experiment growing some microgreens with the extra mustard green and basil seeds that we have kicking around...for a while we thought of microgreens as kind of a gimmick, but now that some customers are starting to ask for them we're going to give it a shot. At the very least it seems to be good use of a reasonably empty greenhouse this time of the year. Having a great crew helps make this year smooth and, for the most part, stress-free.

(Westminster West) We started pulling some garlic for fresh market and the size is quite large this year. Second year in a row however that we suffered significant loss in the field due to winter kill, probably low temperatures. We had remay covering the field but probably should have had two layers. Previous 10 years with now row covers we never lost a single clove. Almost two acres of winter squash under remay and growing well and have only spotted several squash bugs trying to get under and only one cucumber beetle on the entire farm so far this year! I have no explanation for the low numbers and hope to hear how other growers are faring so far. Onion thrips have shown up on one of the Allium fields, including the garlic field for the first time ever. Sprayed Entrust and Pyganic combo but erratic effect so far, hopefully next application will even things up! Plowed up several new acres for next year and to allow more rotation of crops. I haven't used these fields in 34 years and still plowed up old so called bio-degradable plastic mulch that I tried back then. Didn't work I guess. Tunnel tomatoes are ripening and picking first grape and cherry varieties for our stand and farmers' markets. Still selling potted plants and veggie starts but wrapping up that side of the business within next week so we can sneak off for a vacation before our busy produce season really kicks in.

(Starksboro) We've had over 20 inches of rain since Mother's Day. We lost our early spinach field to flooding. That was after 12 inches in 7 days. Other than that it's just been very wet on sandy land. Two years ago we had 20 inches between Mother's Day and July 4th, and we had our biggest potato crop ever! There's still hope, but for now it's hurting the early season cash flow. Surprisingly, despite all the rain at this critical weed control time of year, things are pretty clean due to my new cultivating philosophy: "Cultivate everything once a week whether it needs it or not." This has been a year where waiting to side dress the bulk of the N has paid off big.

(Hinesburg) Cucumber beetles came in earlier and harder than I remember them coming in before. Maybe I didn't get the fertility right? Less leek moth damage on garlic this year than last. I made an effort to make sure the soil didn't dry out early; that has not been hard lately.

(Jericho) Rain, rain go away.....have to fertilize today. Plants are yellow, weeds are green, just barely time to prep beds between the rain storms. A little sun would be nice. If only we were growing rice!

(Brookfield) In fields up high, biggest strawberries I have ever seen, the timing of the first rain must have been just right. The rain can stop for a while but our pumpkins, squash and potatoes are on well-drained soil and they are looking very good. I direct seeded 500 pumpkins and 200 winter squashes and they look better than the transplants. Potatoes are getting beetles but they look excellent. All other crops at a lower altitude need some sun and drying out; the soil is not as well drained.

(Craftsbury) Persistent rain and cool temperatures have slowed blueberry growth. Conversely, it has accelerated grass and weed production and challenged efforts to keep up with grooming/mowing. Sun and heat would be useful and we are anticipating a shift in the weather pattern which has kept temperatures down and precipitation up. We have a portion of our bushes which are without berries (but well leafed) this season and we wonder if this may be due to a late frost which affected a particular variety or if it is a cyclical event.

(Burlington) A good year to farm on sand. Interesting that while it seems the growing season has been cool as well as damp, the growing degree data since April 1st for our location suggest we are above the average temp. If you want to see the regional weather history, you can subscribe to the weekly New England Crop Weather reports from the National Ag Statistics Service at http://www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics_by_State/New_England/Subscribe_to_New_England_Reports/index.asp So far insects haven't been too bad; heavy rains keeping onion thrips at bay. Hoping we can also keep the leek moth and onion diseases in check, as they caused major problems last year. Other crops looking good, though we had poor germ and minor flooding in a couple of potato varieties. Fortunately our summer CSA members responded well to several thousand pounds of 2014 spuds remaining after our winter share; we put them out on the tables in June. Nice to have something bulky for them to cook early in the summer before zucchini! Both the Satina and Elba still looked good and tasted quite good. Loving our 'Manny' cucumbers we trialed in our tunnels this spring; incredible production and great flavor.

(Charlotte) We had to replant our strawberry plants that we planted in May due to all of the rain. The blueberries are doing well, but the fall raspberries are looking weak with all of this rain.

(Elmore) It is so wet that the slugs and snails are the only visitors we are having on our farm. Impossible to plant or till or mow. The upside is no watering, and all the fruit is getting nice and fat. It looks like a really good year for plums, pears, and apples and blueberries and leaf growth. Almost forgetting what sun looks like and blue skies this is why daydreaming is such an important tool here. It's been in the low 50s but I know that summer is just around the corner.

(Little Compton RI) It's water wheel season again! And all the frustrations of dealing with machinery we should have worked on in February. I did have a small revelation: after years of tearing out the 3/8ths clamp screw, which holds the wheel in place, we welded a hardened 3/8ths nut just about the hole (to give it more thread pressure) and then found some stainless steel hex screws. These screws are hardened just by the fact they are SS and they also have a little pucker that really clamps down on the bar. We also added a second screw hole for each wheel. Other big lesson from this year's drought is; oats and peas that go 50% to seed have to be plowed down. With the drought the oats got stiff and just wouldn't melt down with a good harrowing. Also, with the low moisture level in the soil the microbes must have had a hard time getting their job done. Just when I think I should sell my plows, I get a revelation like this.

Digging green-sprouted potatoes this week. Look spectacular! Going to double that crop again next year. No bugs, plenty of moisture early on, rapid growth, one good hilling and good early money. Just have to deal with extra delicate skins so we don't wash them for market.

(Hampton NY) The roadside stand should be opening this weekend. Early planted sweet peppers that were under row covers were set back with the cold and are finally beginning to blossom. The peppers planted at the end of May are full of blossoms and starting to produce. The fruit on the transplanted cucumbers plants are slowly coming into harvestable size and seeded cucumbers are up and growing well. Transplanted zucchini and crookneck yellow squash finally have small fruit; hope to start harvesting this weekend. First sowing of string beans will be ready for picking by weekend. Squash bugs are the worst we have ever seen and although we are not seeing many cucumber beetles they are doing some considerable damage to the burpless cucumbers. The rain has driven the crab and quack grasses into overdrive and could become unmanageable quickly; we are scouting for molds and mildews.

UPCOMING GROWER WORKSHOPS

Links with details at: <http://www.uvm.edu/vtvegandberry/?Page=meetlist.html>

Value-Added Processing Tour. Food Venture Center, Hardwick and Pete's Greens, Craftsbury. 4-6:30 pm July 14.

Keeping Old Tractors Alive and Well. Lewis Creek Farm, Starksboro. 5-7 pm, July 15. Hank Bissell has 5 tractors ranging in age from 40 to 70 years old that he uses every day.

Irrigation Workshop. River Berry Farm, Fairfax. 4-6:30 pm, July 16.

Organic Strawberry Production. Cedar Circle Farm. E. Thetford. 4-6 pm, July 21.