

Vermont Vegetable and Berry News – June 9, 2009

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REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

(Cabot) June frost was dramatic. It was 32 degrees by 10 pm and 34 degrees with patchy frost at 5 am the next morning. It snowed for 20 minutes in the evening, no accumulation. A neighbor has a pretty heavy onion maggot problem. I've noticed 3 plants with maggots out of our third-of-an-acre field of onions, and some actual flies on chives in the garden. Not a lot to do at this point I guess. Strawberries pulled through the frost OK with some covering, but some blackened blossoms. Winter squash under row cover and hoops on plastic just squeaked by. Beets and parsnips look good. Hay crop is thin, with some fungus on grass. Clover looks good. Things are growing slowly and need heat.

(Montpelier) We missed the frost last week but not so lucky the with the previous ones. High winds have been the big issue this spring; causing a lot of trouble with the biotelo mulch and general havoc on the transplants and greenhouses, but everything is moving along nicely so far. Should have cherry tomatoes by the end of June. Our CSA goal came up short three shares this year. Farmer's Market in Barre is off to a good start, people seem very happy to have us in the old location. Wholesale accounts are doing fine, demand is good and I am seeing a lot of buy local support. Now if we could just get up to seasonal temperature norms everything would really take off, even the weeds. Pests in general have been absent so far. No woodchucks, deer are respecting the fence and have not seen much in the way of insects. Not sure if it was everything I did last fall or just the dry and cold conditions that have delayed them.

(Moretown) Are the frosts done yet??!! After shooting the gauntlet a few times with either frost, heavy rain or damaging wind. But the greenhouse is still standing and the tomatoes are growing! The heads of lettuce, especially the red leaf are growing fast and the first batch is days away from harvest. The beet greens are looking great as well and even have some marble sized beets. Moose have been having a fun time trampling the spinach and exposing the seed spuds to the elements. Overall, a wild ride this spring but things are doing just fine.

(Plainfield) It has been quite a roller coaster this spring with all these frosty nights. Had a pump problem on a cold night and ended up with a lot of black strawberry blossoms. Thought it was all over for the season, but the berries just kept blossoming like mad and now the damaged percentage is much less of a worry. I lost a few days picking. Woodchucks after my early kale and peas. Cutworms in beets, a first. Greenhouse plant sales have been good. I might even sell most of my hanging baskets. Next weekend is my last, and then we close to the public to get ready for PYO. Transplanting going well. Really too cold for peppers and melons, but they are out anyway, under row covers. TPB counts in the strawberries are still very low for this date. I have just sprayed once so far. Maybe it is just too cold for them. Cucumber beetles after the winter squash. Using Surround plus Pyganic and Entrust.

(W. Rutland) The chucks are losing the war with the preacher. Garlic looks great, but the cold weather has the peppers looking a bit yellow. Corn is slow to germinate, could be that some of the seed is 5 years old, oh well, I'm cheap. The big furry rats have moved on for the time being.

(Amherst MA) Still getting all of our summer plants in the ground as we were delayed by last Sunday nights' frost (May 31 is very late down here in the Pioneer Valley). The temps must be pretty cool as our spinach is a bumper - and it's been bad for a couple of years running. We opened our CSA distribution with a robust array of greens, lettuce, spinach and radishes. The Chinese cabbage, beets, hakkurei turnips, and strawberries are only days away. The flea beetles have been very bad on the brassicas, so much so that we tried Pyganic a couple of times and it seemed to have good control. We are also seeing a lot of black aphids on the spinach (which we've never seen before) with no idea what to do about that. Plenty of dry weather has made for excellent field prep conditions and luckily we have irrigation because we've needed it quite a lot already.

(Royalton) Galisse, Lollo Rossa, Nancy butterhead, Crispino iceberg lettuces that were planted as transplants on April 17 being harvested this week. Asparagus, marjoram, rhubarb, lovage, parsley and mint going strong. Strawberries and apples have green fruits developing well. Broccoli being harvested, as are the overwintered leeks. Green garlic ready, first carrots and second crop of radishes being harvested. caught the first mauling raccoon of the season, and the first hay field is mowed and drying. So far, things are just barely manageable.

(Gill MA) Started picking strawberries June 2. Have a nice crop, never frosted. Picking Annapolis first, then started Itasca June 5.

(Argyle, NY) Our 2 high tunnels are mostly transitioned for all the summer crops and we are anxious to tally the data on the wonderful yields we had over the winter. We'll be harvesting summer squash and cucumbers from one of the tunnels this week. The new Buckeye waterwheel transplanter has been an amazing tool for us and we set it up to do 1, 2, 3, or 4 rows of plants on almost any spacing (we have 2 sets of Rainflow Super water wheels on it with the easily space-adjusting punches). With the Biotello plastic and hay chop in between, we love this system that has very little maintenance for the whole season. Our new trial lettuce system of mini-heads, retailing \$1 to \$1.50 each, seems to be working quite well. The 5' by 100' bed now grows 1400 heads for only 2-3 weeks, whereas the bed only grows 600 larger heads and is there for 4+ weeks and needs extra care. We'll see how the varieties do all summer (trialing 15 different ones). We've been real dry, but are grateful for irrigation and no diseases. This is one of our best years for strawberries and we are at our peak production right now. Half the patch was planted on the plastic last Sept (annual bed system with Chandlers) and half just with straw mulch like we've done for years. Interesting that the straw mulch only beds are 1 to 2 weeks behind the others, which is great for longer production, but we'll assess if one patch yields better overall. Peas are almost ready as are the beets. Slugs were a real issue a few weeks ago, but the OMRI approved Sluggo worked miracles in only a couple days. Saw a few tarnish plant bugs and cucumber beetles yesterday. Farmers' markets are booming....great time to be a farmer!

QUICK FREEZE YOUR CROPS!

The Vermont Mobile Quick Freeze Unit is now available to be booked during the 2009 growing season. This mobile unit quickly freezes product of all sizes and shapes. It is designed to process 600 pounds of berries an hour with a freezing locker that can hold up to 800 pounds of berries (or equivalent volume of produce). The unit sits inside an 18' x 8' cargo trailer and contains a washing & drying station, racks for holding product to be frozen, and freezing compartment.

Users must provide the electric hook up. There is a \$75 delivery, pick up, and training fee for use of the unit. To receive more information, please contact Helen Labun Jordan at 828-3828 or Helen.jordan@state.vt.us. Details are also available at www.vermontagriculture.com under “Hot Topics”.

JUNE ON-FARM WORKSHOPS

Cosponsored by NOFA-VT, VT Vegetable & Berry Growers Assn. and UVM Extension
Free for: VV&BGA Members and VOF Certified Farmers. Others: \$10 for NOFA members, \$15 for non-members.

Early Season Spinach Trials, June 10, 5-7pm, High Mowing Organic Seeds, Wolcott

The High Mowing Trial Gardens in Wolcott feature new and upcoming varieties that may be available as NOP organic seed in the future. This will be a great opportunity to connect with HMS staff and other growers to learn more about growing spinach, pests, and disease, breeding varieties and the current state of the spinach seed industry. In addition, High Mowing would like feedback and suggestions from professional growers to inform their selection of varieties available in future years. There will be a number of varieties in the field for review. This workshop is geared for professional growers. Presented by Heather Jerrett, R&D Trials Manager, Tom Stearns, President, and the HMS Sales Team.

Directions (do not go to our warehouse on Rt. 15). From Morrisville: Drive east on Rt15 through the town Wolcott. Take left onto East Hill Rd, at cemetery right outside of Wolcott town center. Follow up the hill and take right onto Marsh Rd near top of hill. Follow road a few miles until you see High Mowing greenhouses and parking signs. From Hardwick: Drive west on Rt15. Pass intersection of Rt14 N and follow for three miles. Watch for sign for blind turn onto Marsh Rd on right. Take right onto Marsh Rd. Follow Marsh road up hill, bear left at top of hill where road forks. You will see overlook of fields on left. Park in designated parking area at field entrance by the greenhouses.

Greenhouse Pest Management, Friday, June 12, 5-7pm, Killdeer Farm, Norwich

Jake and Liz Guest have been growing crops at Killdeer Farm for 29 years. Their 12 greenhouses produce their own vegetable transplants, as well as bedding plants, hanging baskets, and greenhouse tomatoes for retail sale at their farm stand. Jake relies on biological controls and cultural practices to manage pests like aphids, white flies, spider mites, and thrips. Margaret Skinner of the UVM Entomology Lab will join us for a discussion of scouting procedures, pest identification, and use of biorational greenhouse IPM strategies for managing pests. Directions: Take exit 13 (Norwich) off I-91 onto route 5 north. Stay on route 5 for about 2 ½ miles. Just after the vet clinic on left, turn left onto Butternut Road. The farm is at end of road.

Zone-tillage demonstration, June 17th, 5-7pm, Clearbrook Farm, Shaftsbury

(This event is free to all.) Zone tillage is a relatively new type of tillage for vegetable crops that has been developed to address soil health - especially compaction issues. It involves a subsoiler (with deep zone tillage) and sets of coulters followed by baskets to cut up residues and create a seedbed for planting into. Growers in NY and CT are finding that zone tillage is a faster way to prepare fields for crops like sweet corn than conventional plowing and harrowing.

Join Chuck Bornt of Cornell Cooperative Extension's Capital District Vegetable Program as he demonstrates the zone-till unit and explains how to optimize its performance. Andy Knafel of Clearbrook Farm has some different types of ground cover to test the zone-tiller on, and he will plant corn into the test plots so we can see how it does this season. Directions: meet at the Farm Stand, located 5mi. north of Bennington and 7mi. south of Manchester on Rt. 7A in Shaftsbury.

Commercial Organic Strawberry Production, June 30, 5-7pm, Wood's Market Garden, Brandon

Wood's Market Garden is a diverse vegetable and small fruit farm with about 30 acres of production; 2-3 acres are fruited strawberries annually, with both retail sales and PYO. Join farmer Jon Satz and Vern Grubinger, UVM Vegetable and Berry Specialist, to look at all stages of their berry production. Also available for observation are various cultivation implements, including both a tine weeder and a reggi eco-weeder. Wood's Market Garden uses organic practices in all of their field production, but is not certified at this time. Directions: Meet at the farmstand on Rt. 7, just over 1 mile south of the village of Brandon.