



Vermont Vegetable and Berry News – July 19, 2011

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<http://www.uvm.edu/vtvegandberry>

REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

(Burlington) Down on the Intervale things are starting to turn around from the flooding earlier this season. Mesclun harvest is going smoothly though we are refining how to use our improved wash line. The yellow squash is starting to produce reliably but the zukes seem to be mostly weirdly shaped and not super productive at this point. We picked our first pickling cukes; also harvesting radicchio, baby pac choi, cilantro, dill, basil and the yaya carrots are big enough to make bunches for farmers market. Since all the crops are growing well so are the weeds. But the crew did a great job this week and I feel like we were winning the battle. I am hoping for the rest of the season – being incredible with great sales to make up for the poor spring.

(Shaftsbury) Picking sweet corn for a week from our transplants. Bon Appetit and Temptation, both really nice. Our earliest ever, but probably 15% earworm damage which we do not normally see until later in the summer. So much for predictable, and it goes to show: put those insect traps up. Crops growing well, everything a bit late. Leafhoppers our main scourge for the season. Early powdery mildew in our first summer squash. Started harvesting garlic, but after looking carefully the plants seem a bit immature, so will wait another week on the rest. Nice broccoli crop.

(Essex) Starting to harvest a lot with the improved weather including: summer, zucchini, beans, cukes, blueberries, raspberries, and many minor crops. Things are starting to improve in the appearance of the crops themselves as well as the plants. The first corn was very short with very small ears but the 2nd and 3rd variety within that planting that was about a week later in days have much more normal size ear. Having a lot of trouble with wildlife, including blackbirds, skunks, and raccoons in the corn, and deer and turkey in the lettuce and other crops. I hope the good weather will stay to start making a dent into the losses from the disastrous strawberry season.

(Starksboro) We had a grueling spring at times I was calling "apocalyptic." Lately the weather has been more cooperative, and each time I say "If we don't get rain soon we'll have to start irrigating", over the hill comes a thunderstorm. After taking such an unprecedented beating in the spring, the rest of the season needs to be perfect. My biggest personal success of the season thus far has been an aggressive ratcheting up of prices inspired by the losses of the spring. No one has skipped a beat or even hesitated. I think they "get it" here in Vermont.

(Grand Isle) We are moving a lot of irrigation pipe as the recent rains have gone around us mostly. In the scenario of "good with the bad" we had the nicest strawberries we have ever grown, yet the absolute worst sweet corn year thanks to blackbirds. Greenhouse tomatoes are finally producing nicely. We are trying lisianthus flowers in a hoop house to hopefully encourage more stem height. Employees are working extra hard in this heat, so we treated everyone to a movie in an air conditioned theatre.

(Middlebury) The high tunnel tomatoes are going strong and the pounds are really starting to flow. Eggplants are getting a little munched but still producing well. High tunnel cucumbers were hit hard and early by powdery mildew; I might tear them out soon. The biodiversity of the farm has spiked-cucumber beetles, squash bugs, imported cabbage worm, nutsedge, galinsoga. Fortunately nutsedge is the only one out of control. Crops are happy, though a little more gentle rain would be appreciated. Farmers' market is really rocking this year, it seems like all produce vendors are doing great and the market is very busy.

(Westminster West). Winter squash is running and setting fruit and looks great. Onions are looking super with some very large bulbs screaming to get harvested! Garlic harvest will start in a day or so, as soon as I finish planting fall carrot and beet crop. It has been very dry, but some heavy rain, coupled with drip irrigation on all our crops, really makes a difference. Tunnel raspberries are huge this year and we started planting another raspberry tunnel to meet the demand. Super heavy yield on tunnel tomatoes and eggplant and good demand. Plant sales keep on coming and watching our mum and aster field grow daily and can't wait to start shipping those out. Noticed we didn't have a white fly problem this year in the greenhouse, maybe the bio-controls worked! Have a nice crew this year and even feels like fun most of the time!

(S. Royalton) Crops and weeds both kicking into high gear with this hot weather, garlic about ready to harvest in the next week or two onions are looking best we've had in a few years. Tried Ed Person's suggestion of screening a hoop house for early cukes and zucchini and it has worked great only one small outbreak of cuke beetles when the door got blown open for a couple of hours. Some leaf mold in the hoop house tomatoes trying to keep ahead of it with Serenade and adding some fans for circulation.

(UVM Student Farm, S. Burlington) We were lucky avoiding any major setbacks from all the rain in the beginning of the season and have been thankful for all the hot sunny weather keeping the disease pressure down, although our skin is not as happy about that! (editor's note: hats, shirts, sunscreen!) We just started getting tomatoes more abundantly and regularly which is exciting, especially for our CSA members. We had some minor issues with root maggots earlier on in the season but we luckily did not end up losing any crops combating them with predatory nematodes. Now we are just struggling with the weeds which have inundated our fields since all the rain a few weeks ago.

(Royalton) Taking a break this year to hike the Long Trail with my teenaged son, think I picked a good year! Harvested the softneck garlic, which I thought we had lost in May due to the rains and compacted clay soil. It pulled through, and we got enough seed stock for next year, but the average sized head is way down. Put the rest of the acreage into cover crops. From the winter veg and berry meeting, we decided to try mustard as a biofumigant. It worked great on galinsoga in the early spring, but was slower to germinate by June and not as effective. Buckwheat planted then works just great, and galinsoga has been beat back. We'll see about August. Asparagus and strawberries were the most prolific ever, hardly any tarnish plant bug or asparagus pests. Hay is out of control; lots of it and high quality, despite the rain (we wrap round bale). Don't have any market vegetables this year, can't imagine how people are keeping up with the weeds.

(Plainfield) July wears me out. Cherry tomatoes doing well, just starting to pick. Peppers and eggplant, too. Winter squash staring to run. Side dressing chard and kale, picking lots. Too hot to work most afternoons. Need to start irrigating this week, as thunderstorms have missed us.

(Wolcott) The season is turning around from its wet start to become a pretty darn nice. Without the extreme heat we had last year, the brassica seed crops look much stronger and we'll likely have better yields. It's too soon to say whether the cucurbits will yield well for seed, but the plants are loving the heat we've had. We harvested the chive seed last week – always the first seed crop – and it looks like a good amount of seed. Otherwise the crew is mostly doing a mix of weeding and hand pollinations, as well as emasculating hybrid squash crops. We're experimenting with various ways to grow overwintered seed crops of brassicas, beets, chard, parsnips, carrots, and onions both outside under row cover and also under cover in hoopouses, and so far the results from the first small plots are encouraging. We got 4.5 lb of chervil seed from only 10 row feet in the hoopouse – that's unheard of!

(Burlington) Sliding into a typical summer pattern, with the usual complement of pests. Onion crop foliage hanging on better than usual; we typically have problems with downy mildew, Alternaria, and Botrytis bringing them down early. We experimented with less nitrogen (appears to be reducing issues with thick necks that don't cure well), white plastic mulch (to reduce thrips), and a couple of thrips control sprays. The combo of these efforts, and maybe lower than usual thrips pressure, reduced our disease problems. I thought Botrytis often followed thrips damage as a secondary problem, but perhaps the other two diseases do too. Learning interesting things about our CSA members: they actually like radishes and braising mix. We planted both for the first time in 15 years as quick turnaround crops after spring floods. Despite their low rank on member preference surveys, we heard lots of positive comments. Go figure!

(Shelburne) Greenhouse doing well, tomatoes coming on well, harvesting daily now. Not sure what disease is affecting my cukes, but yields are very low because of it. Cut flowers are doing well and sales at market are well. Starting transplants for winter production and mapping out greenhouse. Hard with only one house to balance summer crops with planting winter crops. Looking forward to having two greenhouses!

(Plainfield NH) Hot and dusty dry here. Had to spray for scarab beetles, showing up late to defoliate and wreck blueberry fruit. No onion thrips so far this year (yay!) and dry weather keeping solanaceous crops foliage clean and nice. The lack of rain necessitates irrigation which we are having a hard time getting to because of raspberry and blueberry harvest (vegetables also) is in full swing. Weeding is at a standstill, but not the growing weeds. Wallowing through strawberry renovation but grateful for the hillside cultivator I bought years ago and not the old rototiller. Sales pretty strong, hoping to make up for a mediocre strawberry harvest due to damage done this spring to plant roots by Asian garden beetle. I hope this doesn't get to be a regular pest for us.

(Lockport NY) Things are excessively hot and dry here in western NY. Many locations have seen little rain in more than 5 weeks. Pepper plants have suffered root damage which has opened the plants up to infection from bacterial rots. Pollination of summer squash and cucumbers has been lower resulting in fewer marketable fruit. Colorado potato beetle, cucumber beetle, Japanese beetle, and flea beetle pressure has been high on the crops where we would find these pests. Leaf diseases have been minimal, one bright side to a drought. The threat of downy mildew looms around us with Ontario Canada, Michigan, Ohio, and Pennsylvania all reporting infected fields.

(Salisbury NH) Could use a little more rain as we have no drip irrigation. Harvesting lots of broccoli. Walla Walla onions look wonderful with lots of hand weeding. Harvesting some carrots but they always taste better in the fall. String beans, zucchini, cukes, and summer squash finally coming in droves and small eggplants. Seascape strawberries produced this spring, held over from last year, and hoping to get one more fall crop. Do we cut back any foliage and fertilize? Lettuce, spinach, pak choi are hard to keep from bolting. Demand has been high for those items. Customers slow to come but picked up this week-end. Picking blueberries, larger sized since we pruned hard. Raspberries coming. Need to cover, cedar waxwings have been scouting our fields for us! Cabbage and cauliflower ready any time now.

(Little Compton RI) Beware of "German Chamomile" it seems like an innocuous herb but it has become a nightmare! The seed heads produce hundreds of thousand seeds which, like Galinsoga, will hitch a ride on tractor tires and rototiller blades. It is a perennial with a tenacious root system. If it gets a hold in the fall you are in for some tough times in the spring getting rid of it. It has taken over one of our late fall lettuce fields and we have a certified mess. It is now spreading to the traffic areas in other fields. We are game on now but it is going to take an enormous effort to beat it back. If only we had known. Still enjoying the over wintered onions but we have to crack the nut of how and why they go to seed; the seed shaft is hurts the onions appearance and longevity. Late blight in the area but for now keeping it at bay with tag team of Oxidate and NuCop.

UVM PLANT DIAGNOSTIC CLINIC UPDATE

Ann Hazelrigg

Scorch on foliage: if you see dieback or browning on the edges of leaves whether it is in a tree or a tomato or a cucumber, look lower in the plant. Scorch, which can also extend in between the main veins in leaves, is a general symptom and indicates that something is going on lower in the plant to inhibit water and nutrients from getting to the leaf edges. It could be due to root rots, drought, vascular wilt diseases, stem injury, etc. If you symptoms, dig up the plant, look at the lower stem, the roots to see if they are stunted, or non-existent! If all looks good, cut the stem open lengthwise to look for browning in the vascular system. Some insects, like potato leaf hopper, can also cause scorch symptoms on leaf edges.

Tomato leafspot diseases coming on fast and furious. Early blight and septoria fungal diseases start low in plant and work their way up fast or slow depending on the weather. Early blight has larger target shaped spots with advancing yellowing and septoria causes small spots with gray centers. Keep up vigor of plants to "outrun" the disease and keep up with fungicides. Late blight has been found in Ontario, Canada and Long Island. Luckily we have not had the right cool cloudy weather so most foliar problems are attributable to the other leafspot diseases. Leaf mold is appearing in greenhouses on susceptible varieties. This fungus causes a yellow spot on the upper leaf surface and with brown/purplish spores on the undersides. I saw this on outdoor tomatoes last year. Anything you can do to lower humidity below 85% will help. Use fans, open up ends, roll up sides, open upper vents and pick better varieties next time!

Downy mildew has shown up in states around us on cucumbers. This one is always a little tricky to diagnose but yellow spots delineated by leaf veins on the upper leaf surface is common. For more pictures and management: http://vegetablemdonline.ppath.cornell.edu/NewsArticles/Cuc_Downy.htm

Downy mildew has been found on onions in Michigan. This is not the same organism as the downy mildew on cukes. We may also see the disease this year. A good synopsis of the disease with pictures: http://expeng.anr.msu.edu/news/article/downy_mildew_detected_on_onions_so_take_action_now

Raspberry cane borers are causing tip dieback in canes. Look for 2 lines on the cane with a little oviposition hole placed between the lines. Cut out and destroy below the damage.

Cucumber scab showing up on summer squash and zucchinis. Most cukes are resistant. http://vegetablemdonline.ppath.cornell.edu/factsheets/Cucurbit_Scab.htm. Angular leaf spot also diagnosed in melons. Water soaked spots delineated by veins are first symptoms. Centers usually fall out. Disease is seed borne, can live in crop debris for 2 years and is moved around by splashing rain, tools and cucumber beetles.