



Vermont Vegetable and Berry News – August 14, 2012
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REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

(Montpelier) Many interesting insects are enjoying feeding on vegetables. Crops in abundance. Having to work a bit harder to move product this summer. A fair amount of wholesale competition as well as home gardener competition. Value added product continues to add to sales and gives me the ability to process excess product and inventory it for later. It does present some cash flow challenges. That said the farm is looking to be in excellent shape and we are shifting gears into beginning fall and winter production. CSA continues to run well with some hiccups here and there but member satisfaction remains high. Starting to see some disease in house tomatoes but have been able to stay ahead of it.

(Craftsbury) Blueberry season commenced on July 19 and with just one rainout and has proceeded nicely since. The crop yield is 12% higher than the same time last year and visitors are up 10%. The berries are healthy, plump and pest free. We hope to pick through August.

(Proctorsville) Brassicas are abundant, available fourth week in a row for CSA members. Broccoli bolted earlier than normal due to earlier heat. Harvests of many crops are numerous and/or early; the 'late' crops are not so late. Armyworm has arrived but isn't terrible yet; they are staying on grass in the main field and haven't made their way to the corn, which will be ready to harvest soon. Early blight has affected our potatoes so some must be harvested early. In addition to early blight the tomatoes have Septoria leaf spot and hornworms, some covered in parasitic wasp cocoons.

(Westfield) A little relief from the heat and the drought but more rain is needed as my creek doesn't run enough to refill my pond. Most of the crops look good as do the weeds. Huge crop of sweet melons; looks like the winter squash will also have a very good yield. Starting to prepare greenhouse for fall and winter crops.

(Burlington) Although our zone till butternut squash didn't grow (nitrogen tie up? extra insect damage? both?) the weed control in the rolled rye was amazing. Even without vining squash, we'll have only one hour of weeding and cultivating on that half acre by the end of the season. Now if we can figure out how to get a crop at the same time, we'll be all set. Rye went in early (late Sept 2011) and heavy (4 bu/A) and we waited until the end May to roll and zone till. Jury is out on whether our buckwheat - potato intercrop worked to reduce CPB, which we based on a research paper from Cornell (http://rvpadmin.cce.cornell.edu/pdf/submission/pdf65_pdf.pdf). We didn't get enough control in our repeated strips of 24' width of potatoes and 12' buckwheat to keep our first generation CPBs in check, so I resorted to Entrust. But we managed sufficient control spraying only a portion of the field and only one application. Keuka Gold has notably better potato leafhopper tolerance than all of our other cultivars: Red Norland, Kennebec, Red Maria, All Blue, and Peter Wilcox.

(Plainfield) Just enough rain to keep me from turning on the irrigation, not quite enough rain for growing on my sandier soils. Picking lots of tomatoes and eggplant from the greenhouses. Second plantings of kale and chard coming on, fall cabbage starting to head. Lots of fruit set in the winter squash. Crows making a mess of my first ripening sweet corn. Japanese beetles chewing on my basil. Still flea beetles in Lacinata kale and collards. Good bloom in fall raspberries, hoping to make up for a dismal summer crop.

(Grand Isle) Finally got some rain, a huge relief. On Aug. 9 we went to the UVM Extension Crops and Soils Field Day in Alburgh. There was an amazing amount of crop research. Heather Darby has been doing these evaluations for years, and it is an incredible resource for us all. One of the plots evaluated different planting dates for soybeans into winter rye that was killed by a roller crimper. This is the same roller crimper I used as a pilot project to evaluate growing pumpkins and winter squash into roller-crimped winter rye that a slit was opened up by a one row zone tiller, and then was planted into that slit. The problem I had was the roller crimper would flatten the rye, but not kill it and it would spring back up after a few days. Heather says that the winter rye must not only be headed out, but must be mature enough to shed pollen. The roller crimper will actually kill the winter rye then, but not before. The reason it did not kill for us is that we used it too early. I look forward to using the roller crimper next year, and plan to use it at the proper rye maturity.

(Weare NH) Problems with squash and cantaloupes dying off; waiting for diagnosis from plant pathology lab. Otherwise, things are growing well, getting fall plantings in, prepping next year's garlic and potato plots and preparing for putting in a high tunnel.

(Woodbury) We are happy to be moving towards the fall. The rains that we are getting are helping, but I do wish they were lighter. Our onions are taking a hit with Botrytis, and I am worried about their ability to store. Carrots are sizing well, and the winter squash has responded to the water with a new flush of growth and flowers; maybe they will finish? There are always the hens for immature squash. Sales at market holding, but still off from last season. Tomato hornworm is our new disgusting pest. Potato yield is a little light for this time of the year. That no water thing happened at the wrong time for us. The leafhoppers love our most of our potatoes, but leave the Elbas alone. Not much pressure from CPB either. Hopefully they will be spared the hollow heart. Great crew.

(Little Compton RI) It has been difficult to impossible to control potato leafhopper this year. With their numbers so high all around us they seem to laugh at Pyganic and briefly wince at a shot of Entrust. There seem to be a many new fungicides but few new effective insecticides coming online for organic growers. I fear this is a problem as SWD and new stink bugs are coming into our area. I am concerned that folks are over-using Entrust in an attempt to stay ahead of the bugs but as a result we may lose its effectiveness. Thus we are very careful to (only) use Entrust twice a year on our potatoes. Our deer problems are heightened because of this drought. They are eating everything they can find. Even the clover is drying up in town so our irrigated fall tomatoes look awfully good when things get this dry. One bright spot is that our markets are good and people are enjoying what we can bring.

(Westminster West) Finally had a real soaking rain. Tunnel tomatoes selling well and no sign of late blight yet. Crazy amount of cabbage moths flying, keeping me busy spraying. Grew potatoes on a field that hasn't been plowed in 50 years, no weeds nor bugs; a rare thing. Some signs of Fusarium wilt on some winter squash, hope it stays rare as we have the best looking fields in many years with a heavy fruit set, maturing nicely. Had a great turn out for our first Garlic Harvest dinner, over 80 garlic hungry folks. A great opportunity to tell our farm story to customers. Looking forward to trying a Fall Harvest supper as well. Pulling and selling a giant crop of Walla Walla onions. Candy comes out next, looking huge, our later types not so much, at least not yet. Planting lots of spinach for fall harvest. We learned the hard way to really check our insurance policy to see what is covered and what is not. We had damage from a hail storm early June and our 'All Risk' coverage did not cover the damage to our greenhouse plastic.

(Argyle NY) Finally got enough rain and now we don't want so much. Getting the last of the broccoli, cabbage, and kale planted out and spraying with Surround on both the plants and Biotello has helped a lot with transplant shock on the hot, sunny days. We had squash vine borer for the first time ever plus ferocious flea beetles and leafhoppers.

Not many diseases; the copper/serenade preventative sprays may have helped. Just started seeing downy mildew on basil and hoping there is a control soon, haven't seen anything for that. Onion/shallot crop is the best in years and we now have too many sweet onions all at once. Red and storage onions are still finishing off. The markets remain strong but we need a larger labor force to keep up, especially as we start production for three large high tunnels for winter growing. The best spinach for us over the summer in the tunnels as well as in the field has been Reflect, which doesn't seem to be too available but Space was also good (we grew about 10 varieties). Reflect seems unaffected by all the heavy rains; it was the best survivor last fall with the hurricane rains. Most crops maturing early, so curing and storage will also start early.

(Hampton NY) Hampton: Third wave of cucumber beetles is light; bigger issue is squash bug, they are hammering winter squash. Acorn squash attacked by squash vine borer. I have been pulling and popping open the vines and feeding the grubs to the chickens. Deer in the popcorn and paste tomatoes. Septoria leaf spot seems to be slowed by copper fungicide but not halting it. Using Agribon over the rows to minimize sun scald; other option is to cut tomatoes off the plant with some vine and allow them to ripen in the barn. Purple and green Beans producing and selling well. Same with my bell peppers. Beets a little slow growing but selling well; better with the greens on than off. Harvested first cantaloupe and watermelon. Sweet corn went on the stand last week with good sales. Sunflowers and zinnias have been selling like mad on Saturdays but not so much the rest of the week. Pumpkins way ahead of schedule, already bright orange.

UVM PLANT DIAGNOSTIC CLINIC UPDATE –Ann Hazzelrigg

Fruits: Tentative ID of Spotted Wing Drosophila from trap in crabapples in S. Burlington and another suspect from the southern area of the state. (Ed note: they are abundant in blackberries and fall raspberries in a couple of towns in southern VT, also seen in blueberries.)

Onions: lots of thrips damage on leeks with tiny white lesions all along the leaves. You can see these with a hand lens if you look carefully. With wet cool weather, Botrytis can move in on damaged tissue. Still a ways to go for the leeks so controlling the thrips is important.

Tomatoes: a little bit of late blight here and there but not rampant. Home gardens have had some in Starksboro and Bristol. Some reported on potatoes mid-state. Armyworms showing up in some sweet corn and also in greenhouses on tomato fruit. Hornworms also causing damage.

The usual blossom end rot showing up, and some bacterial canker in greenhouses on heirlooms. If you see wilting of plants that don't recover, skin the 'bark' off the stem and look for the diagnostic browning in the vascular tissue. It is very easy to see. Pull out any infected plants and dispose of away from the greenhouse. Watch the plants next to the infected one for new symptoms.

Broccoli and Cauliflower: Swede midge damage in Burlington, diagnostic dead and rotting growing points, curling and puckering of leaves and scarring on the stems. Some comments from Andy Jones at the Intervale "Swede midge is an emerging pest in Vermont and New England. Introduced to North America in Ontario about 10 years ago, it is slowly spreading throughout the region. It feeds on the growing points of Brassicas, forming galls and stunting their growth, and has several generations a year. I have a particular interest in the pest, as ours was the first farm in the state where it was identified in 2006. We've suffered complete losses of our late summer and early autumn broccoli crops in many years since, and damage to many other planting slots. It also affects other Brassicas, in minor to major ways. Chief among the control problems is that the adult flies are hard to target and kill, and the larvae, which do the actual damage, are sequestered so far inside the plant that you can't reach them with sprays. For that reason it is of particular concern to organic growers, as only systemic materials have any demonstrated efficacy. Likewise, rotation can help, but small diversified growers with a limited land base are going to have a hard time out-rotating it. While it may not be a problem yet on your farm, it is spreading throughout the Champlain valley, with populations now noted in Charlotte, Hinesburg, and Fairfax as well as Burlington. Projections are that it will eventually become endemic throughout most of the northern tier states."

Peppers: Fusarium canker on pepper showed up last week. Large sunken areas on stems causing wilt and death.

Basil: downy mildew showing up; it looks like a nutritional problem on the upper side of the leaf (yellowing) but it looks like dirt on the undersides of the leaves. Hard to manage and major crop losses result.

http://www.longislandhort.cornell.edu/vegpath/photos/downymildew_basil.htm.

Cucurbits: scab on zucchini, small circular fruit lesions are showing up on fruit with green/black with fungal spores. http://vegetablemndonline.ppath.cornell.edu/factsheets/Cucurbit_Scab.htm. Wilting in squash seems to be the major problem of the last 2 weeks. Lots of things can cause this; bacterial wilt is common, especially with high populations of cucumber beetles earlier this summer.

Before you chalk up the wilt to bacterial disease, check the crown of the plant for squash vine borer (need to split the stem longitudinally since you don't always see the telltale frass.) If this looks ok, look at the roots and check for rot, poor roots and a yellow discoloration at the soil line. I have had several samples with Fusarium, a common soil borne fungus that likes warm temperatures. After the last couple of rains the fungus really took off in some fields. Rotation is the best management tool. NY state has been seeing a lot of the same problem.
<http://www.apsnet.org/publications/apsnetfeatures/Pages/CrownFootRotSquash.aspx>.

Potatoes: still lots of leafhopper damage showing up, followed by early blight.