



Vermont Vegetable and Berry News – August 28, 2012
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REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

(Tunbridge) We have beautiful red peppers, not something we see a lot of on our soil, and if we do, usually not until September. Walla Walla onions were great this year, all big, many over two pounds. Only a few coveted ones left in the walk-in for us. We put all onions on plastic which was a great decision since we have only one full time worker when normally we need three. I guess the beneficial nematodes actually did their job. Other onions look great too. Garlic is all big. Shallots are in the barn. Winter squash and pumpkins mostly clipped and some in the barn. Basil looking good. Probably need to cover it if it is going to be in the 40s at night. Beans and cucumbers doing nicely with this dry weather, no mildew problems. Flea beetles seem to be doing well, too, but most crops able to outgrow them. Tomatoes tasting great, tons of cherries this year. Put a shade cloth over the spinach. Sick of lifting heavy things, folks should get out of the gym and get paid to work out on farms. In August Saturdays and Sundays make for great markets.

(West Brookfield) Two words- LATE BLIGHT! My fields in West Brookfield are all fine, however, all the field tomatoes are completely blighted in East Roxbury.

(Woodbury) It seems dry again, and even though I am trying to dry some crops down, I would still welcome some water. It turns out that the maze of roads in Woodbury are no match for late blight, it arrived in the field cherry tomatoes. They were just starting to really come. I guess I should have stuck to the greenhouses. Onions are in, about what I expected, but still not what I was looking for. Winter squash can still use a little more time but are looking good. Topped potatoes and will dig in a few weeks.

(Burlington) Waving goodbye to a great melon season. Sorry we didn't have a third planting (or later varieties) of watermelon and cantaloupe. Really liked 'Goddess' and 'Sarah's Choice' this year, though all the melons responded nicely to the extra warmth. At the first anniversary of Irene, I find myself oddly hoping for a little bit (but not too much) of Isaac as it swings across the Eastern states.

(Rochester) We had a great blueberry crop this year but it came to a rapid and unexpected end mid-August. With about a quarter of the crop still to pick, fruit from all varieties quickly went soft and began to fall or spoil. We have never experienced this; the usual pattern is that pickable berries hold on late into the season, especially Jersey and Blue Crop. One explanation could be that the early emergence of the crop in the warm spring accelerated ripening, and our irrigated crop suffered from the 3 inches of rain we received in the second week of August: the ripe fruit seemed to take up that moisture and either split (Patriot) or go soft (the others). It could also be that the soft fruit is due to SWD egg-laying but we have found no SWD in our traps, and the ripening fall raspberries are all sound. I have seen a lot of small flies in the evening around the ripe fruit, but thought it could be any type of fruit fly, not necessarily SWD. Perhaps the traps baited with apple cider were not that attractive/effective. Blackberries are not forming or ripening well this year, which we attribute to frost damage and drought. Fruit that is present is staying firm and tart, presumably due to lack of rain (they are not irrigated) but they are certainly not going soft like the blueberries. Meanwhile, the fall raspberries have not ripened any earlier than usual, for some reason. They do have nice blooms and fruit set so we are hopeful of a good crop for September and are praying that first frost is late again this year.

(Plainfield NH) SWD has shown up in the fall raspberries. The traps, at least my variation which utilized yeast and were painted red, worked, but not as well as the fruit as an attractant, where they seemed to show up in greater numbers. So there was really no advance warning. Because the infestation has not been documented by my retail customers, we will continue to harvest and sell until we get some "yuck" responses. Adult populations (hopefully) have been suppressed by applications of synthetic pyrethroid alternated with spinosad. Elsewhere the drought continues to be a drag for us. It costs a fortune to irrigate, it doesn't do as good a job as rain, and there are not enough boots on the ground at this time to also get stuff harvested. Plus there is not much water in the river. Potatoes will be dug in a week, onions are up and we are trying to find a window of opportunity to harvest the fall cucurbits. I think we are going to see a lot of pressure on fall cucurbits once harvested and stored in the greenhouse from rodents. There is not much moisture out there for them and they will be really moving in and attacking stuff in storage for the moisture as well as the food content. I have found them in places this year we normally wouldn't. In the absence of a mean farm cat, have been putting out a trap line and rodent baits. Never seen so many red squirrels.

(Williston) We were lucky enough to get .03 inches of rain the other day but pretty dry otherwise. I have set up an inline fertilizer system on the irrigation and it's working great. I have been using liquid kelp. The herbs and flowers need a little boost this time of the year after several cuttings. I have had an explosion of green stink bugs at the farm. They started out in the sunflowers and now have moved to all the fields. They have 5 instars (stages) with the final stage that flies. They pierce and suck the plant which then withers and dies. I have been hand picking and used Neem then Pyganic 1.4. Japanese Beetles are out there too. Just harrowed in my second cover crop of buckwheat and planted peas/oat/vetch for a winter cover crop.

(Huntington) Downy mildew came on strong in the storage onions, but late enough to not affect yields too badly. Increased planting density on silver mulch resulted in much thinner necks, and bacterial disease in the bulbs is not prevalent as of early topping; we'll see what our cull rate is in a few months before passing judgment. I'm a bit vexed by this tradeoff between bacterial and fungal diseases on onions, though. No sign of late blight on potatoes, and not too much scab except on Kennebecs. Low-pressure overhead irrigation with mini-wobblers in leafy greens have kept germination consistent during the dry spells.

(S. Hero) I had leek moth damage on garlic here in the Champlain Islands and pulled my plants before the larvae reached the adult stage. As I understand it, there are multiple generations of the moth and if they make it into the bulb they will overwinter in your soil. This is a pest making its way via Quebec, so most of Vermont has not been subjected to it yet. Anyone who hasn't seen the damage might consider covering their allium plants next year as the moth seems to be moving pretty quickly.

(Little Compton RI) We have found a new bird to hate: the little brown English Sparrow. The rascals have been eating newly germinating lettuce for weeks now. At first we thought it was lack of germination (love blaming it on seed companies) or maybe the heat. But we've caught them with just-germinated lettuce sprouts in their beaks five or six times now. We are covering flats with remay now till the lettuce is showing the first true leaves. After a brief respite from the drought we are back to trying to do the impossible and keep everything watered. My summer irrigation chief is back at college and now I am double-timing it to keep it all going. Farmers markets have been sluggish of late due to end of summer 'last beach days and getting kids back in school' taking the wind out of the Saturday sales. Everything is two weeks early in the winter squash dept. and so we are starting to bring it into greenhouses to cure it properly before any big fall rains or a hurricane.

(Wolcott) We're harvesting and cleaning the last of the brassica seed crops and beginning to ramp up for the wet-seeded crops. Harvested the first of the tomatoes for seed, and peppers will start soon. Those will go on for a long time; at least until we get hard frost. Still no late blight, but we keep expecting it. The trial tomatoes look as good or better than ever; really good fruit size and minimal disease. We're beginning to plant our overwintered seed crops in seasonal high tunnels, enjoying that we can do more than one variety per species because we'll now have two separate houses in separate locations since we got a second one funded by a grant from the VT Specialty Crops Block Grant Program.

(Salisbury NH) Field tomato vines pretty much dead and fruit succumbing to various diseases. We have quite a few stink bugs of all different shapes, sizes, colors. Confirmed SWD in our raspberry patch. We usually plant Provider green beans but have been impressed with the volume and quality of Secritariat and Inspiration from Stokes. The only negative is they seem to pick hard, like yellow Rocdor. The spinach and mesclun mix is finally starting to grow nicely again. Carrots are coming but as always the weeding was put off too long. Do flame weeders really work? Bought electric fencing to free range chickens but find on our fields 20 hens can knock the grass down to bare ground in short order. We move the fence every few days to avoid a problem. Eggplant and pepper suffered from earlier heat wave; little fruit set but there are some we hope will make it before frost. Weed problems this year: purslane and carpet weed taking over some areas. Hard to believe it's time to start getting the hoophouse ready for winter. Sales are good and customers seem appreciative to have local food.

(Argyle NY) We've been back to full irrigation again and fighting transplant shock in the fields as well as some diseases but most crops are looking good. Powdery Mildew came in on cucurbits but Kaligreen/Stylet Oil seems to have it under control and the winter squash should finish off fine. We planted Chandler strawberry tips Aug. 1 and they are growing great and will be ready to plant out the first week of Sept. Also trialing several new strawberry varieties for the annual bed system as well as 4 varieties of everbearing strawberries. We tasted them all at Lareault Nursery in Canada where they were produced: great flavors. Many crops are ahead of normal and we are selling leeks at markets earlier than we ever have. Kale and chard were seeded several weeks ago for the winter tunnels and Asian greens will be seeded next week. Spinach has been a challenge in the fields to germinate but Waitiki, Space, Reflect and Raccoon are doing well. Another busy fall planting season is upon us with new variety trials, including Brussels sprouts.

UPCOMING MEETINGS see: <http://www.uvm.edu/vtvegandberry/meetings/meetlist.html>

Variety Selection and Disease Management. High Mowing Seeds, Wolcott VT. 4 pm Sept. 5

Soil Testing and Cover Crops. Wellspring CSA, Marchsfield VT. 4 pm Sept 12

Growing for Seed Production. Lewis Farm, Waterbury VT. 4:30 pm, Sept. 13

Potato Production at Foote Brook Farm. Johnson VT. 4 pm Sept. 18