



Vermont Vegetable and Berry News – August 9, 2011

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NEW RETAIL PRODUCE PRICE REPORTING SYSTEM

The new system for reporting prices of direct marketed fruits and vegetables sold in Vermont is ready! Beth Holtzman and Jessie Schmidt of UVM Extension worked with a programmer to improve the system piloted last year so is it faster and easier to use. Just fill out the price form once and when you return it will auto-fill with the prices you submitted last time. If your prices haven't changed, you can resubmit the form as is, or just those that have changed. You don't need to report prices for all your crops but it would help a lot if you report on several crops monthly so we can collect and share useful data about pricing trends around the state. Every time you submit a report, you get entered into a monthly drawing for a \$50 gift certificate to High Mowing Seeds! The price reports you submit will be saved (password protected and only for you) for you refer to later. Your prices are aggregated with other reports and thus anonymous; the data will only show high, low, average and median prices for each crop. If enough people participate, we'll also post this data by county, so you can see if prices vary around the state. Calls for price reports will be sent out along with a call for Reports from the Field, but you can report anytime. Submit price reports at: <http://www.uvm.edu/farmpricing/>. Log in on the right hand side of the page; the first time only you must create your account with email and password. For this trial run please report your prices by Thursday Aug. 11 and the results will be posted by Friday night Aug. 12 at: <http://www.uvm.edu/vtvegandberry/ProducePriceReports.html>

REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

(Middlebury) The past few weeks have been great for the plants. Our watermelons went from none to almost ripe in no time. Field tomatoes and cherry tomatoes are starting to come in, as are the tomatillos. Ginger also took off in the last week. I am experimenting with growing it this year and thought it was going to be a failure, it produced leaves but no rhizomes to speak of. Then I looked yesterday, and there were rhizomes. Still not sure that it is going to be worth the greenhouse space but I'll see. Last week the onions took a major hit from purple blotch, and spraying Oxidate or Serenade will cost more than the onion are worth. I might use copper or just hope for the best. The irony is that this year the onions were much better tended than last year, well weeded and transplanted on time.

(West Brookfield) Dry! The 90 degree heat wave a few weeks back made beautiful romaine and broccoli bolt fast. Tomatoes, peppers and squashes were loving it though. Cabbage moths are the pest of the year at our farm; sprayed Pyganic once but will have to apply again soon. Hard to think that it is fall planting time already!

(Burlington – UVM Common Ground Student-Run Farm) It has been unbelievably dry this week; what a change from this spring. Great time for our irrigation AND cooler to break! Aside from a few technical difficulties things are still looking good. Our beans are going crazy, we have some jalapenos and okra! We found large tomato hornworms and Acorn squash is facing squash vineborer pressure. We are now undertaking to re-trellis our field tomatoes which are so heavy and unruly they have all but destroyed our stake and twine trellis. Nonetheless they have produced gorgeous tomatoes! We look forward to our watermelons which are just about ready, and our winter squash and gourds.

(Plainfield) Hot and dry is not the worst. There is still water in the river, help to carry pipe, a working pump, and some new hose to get the water to the fields. Crop response to water is dramatic. Spraying Dipel for corn ear worm, pepper borer, tomato hornworm, and cabbage moth. Entrust has lost its touch on CPB, and it is time to switch to Pyganic. Best eggplant crop ever in the new high tunnel.

(Plainfield NH) Got some drought relief last week which bought us a chance to spray, plant, weed and get some covers in. Need rain soon or back to irrigation. Originally thought our blueberries were a mediocre crop but it sized up well and wondering where they all keep coming from as the crop looks like it will be 50% bigger than last year. Melons have been coming in and although we predominantly planted Sarah's Choice and Maverick (Brent Loy's varieties from UNH) all varieties are exhibiting incredible flavor as a result of little bit of effort to keep the foliar diseases in check and no doubt the intense heat in July. Tomatoes are producing nicely although Fulvia (leaf mold) on some varieties is present and the tomato market is beginning to be saturated. As a result we are moving to our list of people who want to process tomatoes. Set traps for CEW after hearing from some growers that they were hit with it unexpectedly early, but finding none in 12 days the trap has been out. Suffered some pepper blossom and small pepper abscission in the intense heat, the purple varieties most susceptible. Sales in both wholesale and retail are still pretty strong, so far.

(Starksboro) It's getting pretty dry now, and we're irrigating what we can. We had a quick but heavy downpour back in early July just when the potatoes needed it. It's been dry enough that we have avoided any blight so far. I'm completing my first year with a high tunnel, and I've got to say: I'm not sure I ever want to grow anything outdoors again.

(S. Royalton) My field tomatoes look weak but are loaded with nice size fruit. It hurts my pride to look at them but you can't eat pride. Cantaloupes have poor size and very small plants, looks like we'll get half the harvest we normally do. On the plus side, we used the Japanese paper pot transplanter to transplant early sweet corn (planted about 3,000 plants an hour) and that did amazing. It was easy to control the spring weed plague and it appears that the denser stand has made it more difficult for the redwing blackbirds to operate. Market and stand sells have been strong.

(Warren) So far so good this season. High tunnel and hothouse crops are doing really well and we are harvesting really nice carrots right now. Great celery, too; it's on drip with a timer, watering it daily. First beet harvest was crummy with lots of breakdown on the goldens and chioggias. We have yet to run out of salad greens which is a first. Seascape strawberries are off the list: tarnished plant bugs are damaging most of the berries but there are still plenty of nice ones; with the lack of rain the quality is terrific but people are not in the strawberry frame of mind. We have been irrigating 24/7 for 3 weeks now and are happy for the rain.

The one section that we did not have irrigation on, a seeding of cilantro, dill and scallions simply withered away and died. Potato crop is looking good; surprising because the tops are really short. Onions have disease and are dying back. We have harvested a bunch of Bridgers already; about half the yield we were hoping for. Nice though, really thin necks. We put a bunch of drainage tile in the gaylords that we use for harvesting. Big difference in the drying.

(Grand Isle) We need rain. The little bit we have gotten does not seem to make a difference so we move irrigation pipe daily. We keep reminding ourselves: too dry is better than too wet. The parking lot at the farm is host to many out-of-state license plates so we are busy bagging vegetables for those summer barbecues and excursions on the boat for summer visitors. We attended the UVM extension Crop and Soil Field Day at the Rainville's Borderview farm in Alburgh and learned about various small grains grown for oil extraction, food products, and animal feed. Test plots and research data showcased particulars of soil fertility and reduced tillage results. Crops were hops, sunflowers, wheat, oats, barley, flax, triticale. Heather Darby and the rest of the staff put on a superb and well attended event.

(Little Compton RI) At the start of the CSA season in mid-June we realized that we didn't have enough cherry tomatoes for our members. We grow about ten varieties of heirloom cherry tomatoes in custom buckets hanging from the purlins of one of our old herb houses. We went and took nice clean 'sucker' cuttings from them. In four days all 400 cuttings had sprouted roots, nursed along on a half-shaded bench. The first fruiting cluster was just two leaves up the stem; talk about instant tomato seedlings! If we had started this same process with seed it would have taken three times as long and the plants would not have been as vigorous. Our first cuttings were six weeks ago and we are already harvesting tomatoes. This new knowledge will come in handy next season when I take suckers off my expensive European hybrids. It is too late for making a tomato crop this year but not too late for experimenting with the process; you will be impressed. RI and MA finally got a full day of rain after three plus weeks of nothing! Too late for the onion crop but just in time for leeks, Brussels sprouts and winter squash. Now seeding for overwintering kale and aiming to seed overwintering onions around August 26th.

(Shaftsbury) Harvesting sweet onions; they are huge despite starting out in rough shape with lots of onion maggot and general neglect throughout the season. Storage onions look not so nice in a different field. Corn earworm moths showed up in trap over the weekend. Powdery mildew showing up on cucurbits and am going to try spraying with JMS-Stylet Oil (organic formulation), see <http://www.stylet-oil.com/> which according to a Cornell study had the best efficacy of any control.

(Fair Haven) As a long time farmer I am worried that our new generation farmers lack common sense about farm sanitation practices. Many have no idea that they may get cross contamination when going farm to farm. Disease and insects/eggs or other contamination can be brought from one farm to another just by working in one field and then going to the next field or farm and it is even more serious if animals are involved at these farms. We do not participate in agritourism, have interns, or generally allow outsiders in our barns and fields because of this. We keep a tight hold on sanitary conditions and when outsiders do visit we keep control of where they roam and have our own boots and coats for them to wear. I wonder if better sanitation practices would solve many pest problems or at least contain them to smaller areas. It is free. It is easy. It is simple to practice. Just wear newly cleaned clothes in your fields. Never wear clothes worn at another farm on your farm until they have been washed. Wear washable shoes and clean them when leaving your field to go to another farm and then clean them before you wear them back in your own fields and barns.

(Shelburne) Getting all my winter seeding done, ready to plant out the first winter crops. Still harvesting loads of greens, tomatoes, flowers, peppers out of the hoop house. It is dry! What a crazy swing to go from the incredibly wet spring and beginning of summer to desert dry conditions. Burger Nights at the farm are hopping and we are very excited about the response we have had from our community. Trying to figure out a way to capture this momentum going into the winter.

(Salisbury NH) A little break from the heat and dry weather, though not much. A lot of our broccoli either bolted or looks funky. Also a big difference in cauliflower that got wrapped. Those exposed to the heat ended up discolored and grainier texture. Not bad cooked but funky raw. Beets seemed to get huge overnight. Was disappointed with Jade Pagoda variety of Chinese cabbage. It was supposed to have nice vase-like growth but ours are bigger and more like Napa. Biggest bug problem this year has been Japanese beetles; they are all over our raspberries (not just the leaves). We even had some on the broccoli leaves. Summer squash and zucchini have powdery mildew. Like the taste of Ishtar zucchini but most customers seem unwilling to try it. We find the seeds are less in your face on the bigger ones. Not real crazy though about the shape, it is more bulbous than most people prefer. Great cukes: Marketmore and Intimidator. Waiting for new plantings mesclun mix and spinach to come after this heat; New Zealand spinach is almost ready; customers can't get enough spinach. Overall it has been a really good year so far.