



Vermont Vegetable and Berry News – September 22, 2015
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REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

(Westminster West) Great harvest weather for sure! All winter squash finally loaded into bins and moved into barn for curing and safekeeping. Good yields and very little loss from disease or random field animals. Pumpkins had some loss however with quite a few showing stress from disease, a first here. Pie pumpkins seem fine and a good crop was harvested. All other crops looking great and sales are holding steady with prices about the same as last year. Huge amount of onions dried and ready to run thru the topper this week, with some sun scald on the red varieties. Very little disease on the yellow storage types with large, solid heads. Heavy pressure from cabbage moths, most I have ever seen on a field of late Napa cabbage; finally getting it under control with a tighter spray schedule with Dipel. Haven't kept up with clearing the fields of plastic mulch and drip lines so unable to get cover crops on in a timely way, hope with major crops in we can put some labor into cleanup before it's too late.

(Starksboro) Sweet potatoes, winter squash and onions are all out of the field. We went to the Cornell meeting about Leek Moth because we had it in our garlic, onions and leeks this season. The meeting was excellent and we feel prepared to do battle with this pest next year. There was also great information on garlic harvest/storage that helped explain some weird drying we had (extra crinkly garlic skins). Fall crops are looking good, mostly thanks to the irrigation system that has been sitting around waiting to be used for 3 years. It was 39 degrees here last night, so we are making plans for the inevitable first frost warning.

(Londonderry) Leaf mold struck hard in our tomato house this August. Heavy pruning, fixing drip line leaks and Oxidate held it off. Another round of pruning and regular application of Oxidate has allowed 90% of the plants to thrive and continue to fruit! Tiny bit of frost this am. Just about the longest season between frosts for us in 18 years! Waiting for cold temps to sweeten the Liberty apple crop. Good set of late raspberries. Nice and dry for winter cover cropping ground work, we'll take it. September harvest and sales very strong. More weddings and events than usual have increased the often slow wholesale-to-inns after school has started. All in all an awesome season with the 2015 bills paid. Good leg up on 2016.

(Burlington) Harvest is swinging into fall storage, shuffling bins, and wondering whether we'll have enough cooler and warm storage space. Nice to have a dry September and warm evenings; very little concern about chilling injury this year, as fully mature squash will be out of the field before they've seen much for cold nights. After a terrible downy mildew outbreak in our long term storage onions, things are looking OK post-curing. Despite having thick necks when the tops went down, we left them in the ground in the field for quite a while (contrary to many recommendations.) After a few weeks the necks thinned out quite a bit, and most have cured well. Size is a bit small, but given that I'd written them off entirely, we'll be able to grade out for many nice 2 to 3.5" onions with tight necks. Maybe we'll see more soft rot out of storage due to longer exposure to pathogens in the field, but so far leaving them in the field longer looks like a good choice.

(Brattleboro) Last night we had a few patches of frost in the lowest points in our pasture - luckily none of our veggie fields felt it, but a good reminder it was of all the work to do before it really hits! Gotta fix those greenhouse doors and windows. Pulled most of the tomatoes last week in the high tunnel to prep beds for winter greens - this year the hornworms have been the worst I've seen. The deer have severely damaged one of our fields, moving most recently into our fall beets and carrots and green beans. I guess deer fencing is our next project on the ever-growing list. More than half our fields are cover cropped, and it is feeling good to getting closer to hitting "reset" on what has been a tough year for us. We're focusing on getting the roof on our new farm stand/ wash station / walk-in cooler, and look forward to not hauling all our root crops down into the basement root cellar this year, and turning off the many fridges we've got running at all times. All the squashes and pumpkins are out of the fields and looking good.

(Williston) Looks like a good stretch of warm frost free weather ahead of us. Last year my first frost was Sept 19th! Field basil (thai, lemon, pistou, purple) is finally showing signs of downy mildew. I will be pulling most annual herbs and seeding down with pea,oat,vetch for the winter. Weeds were incredible this year and hard to keep up with. I may be dealing with them next year but hope that the buckwheat I plant will smother them out. Rosemary is still going strong with incredible growth in late summer. No powdery mildew on rosemary or tarragon this year. With the shorter days mint is flowering even on the shortest stems. It had a slow start in the spring with cool/wet conditions but flourished with warm weather and sunshine. Harvesting the last of the cherry tomatoes today in hoophouse and will be transplanting kale and spinach soon. I am also going to try spinach direct seeded this year. I did not have great luck with my pinpoint seeder last year due to rocky soil. Peppers in the hoophouse went wild this year and sounds like everyone else had a good year too. Sales are slow due to the abundance but I will keep them in as long as I can till the direct spinach goes in. I attended the Allium class last week in Burlington which was fantastic. Learned lots about the leek moth, garlic harvesting tips and so much more.

(Proctorsville) First light frost last night. All in all an excellent harvest this season, despite the lack of rain mostly. Brussels sprouts crop was disappointing. Barely any sprouts formed, even after pulling leaves off. Disease is our suspicion, small black dots started to appear all over the plants mid-August. Tomato crop was prolific. Downy mildew hit all squash and cucumber plants. Most fields are ready for winter; only our high tunnel, cold frame, and root vegetables are left for the season, and that is ok with us!

(Elmore) So many pears and so little time to gather them! Our customers and friends still think you can't grow pears or plums or so many kinds of apples up here in northern Vermont but when they stop over and see the 15 gallon buckets that are full of them and the bending over trees loaded up with succulent fruits they seem to have a new outlook on life. We are hoping this is simply a gift from the universe, and not a precursor to a very long and challenging winter. I have emailed or called or visited all our usual buyers for our fall harvest marketing of fresh fruit and spreadable jam but I have not received any calls or emails back; it is very frustrating and sad. It used to be that coop buyers were so happy and excited when local growers had good things. now they don't give us the time of day. This is the first year I can remember that we have so many peppers turning red and the Jerusalem artichokes are already in full milk chocolate scented bright yellow flowers, contrasted against the deep blue clear skies. There is a lot to be grateful for...

(Plainfield) Growing season is ending with a flood of red and yellow sweet peppers. Best are Camen and Gourmet. Quite a bit of rot due to corn borers and sunscald. Lots of color in the hot peppers, especially Hot Paper Lantern and Devil Serrano. Late May planted hybrid carrots all sized up. Digging them now as they are starting to split. Rutabagas and daikon still sizing up. Kale going strong. Some splitting heads in cabbage, summer varieties held too long. Some cabbage failing to size, indicating some fertility dead spots in our most sandy soils. Great fall raspberry crop, making up for total failure last season. Still way too dry to plant cover crops.

(Little Compton RI) It has been the toughest year farming yet many setbacks and a historic drought at the tip of southern New England. We have circled the wagons around the fields with water sources and are ready to get it all packed away for a better year next go round. Markets and demand strong just huge gaps in our production. Like not a head of lettuce in three weeks!

(Plainfield NH) Rains have relieved the drought stress, cover crops certainly appreciate it, as well the help, who had to wear dust masks while digging potatoes. Carrots, parsnips potatoes, sweet potatoes, pumpkins and squash are yet to harvest. Sales have generally slowed, attributable to the post Labor Day doldrums, yet labor bill is still high. Fall raspberries have a fair crop due to earlier drought stress. Resisting spraying them at SWD threshold levels, but keeping them picked clean; third year doing so and getting no bad customer feedback. CEW and ECB pressure has been light this year and continues to be so.

(Newburyport MA) Continued warm sunny weather, plus irrigation to germinate recently planted fall crops, equals instant weed problems here in September. Strong demand, good harvests and late weeds all put demands on our precious time this month. Also trying to get winter greenhouse crops planted on time. Nice looking winter squash crop coming right up on harvest.

(Argyle NY) Yesterday ended a long, hot summer and it has been very dry for us for 2 months. Irrigation has been critical to good crop supply. Markets have been stronger this year; we don't know why, but we are happy! Fall crops are good except for carrots, which have been fighting *Alternaria/Cercospora* that we have not seen in over 10 years. Some vegetables have matured quickly due to the heat, like the last corn planting, the first cauliflower set, and the cucumbers/squash are gone completely for the season. We just planted out the Chandler strawberry plugs that we produced from tips. The high tunnels are almost empty as we prepare to plant winter crops. We will continue to hot water treat the seed of all spinach, parsley, and brassica crops that go in the tunnels, as well as do drenches of Actinovate/Root Shield Plus/Serenade Soil. We are the only one in this area known to have the leek moth (aren't we lucky) and we are quite sure it came from onion transplants from northern Vermont in May, so BEWARE when purchasing plants! Good weed control has been accomplished this year with a fantastic crew and we are starting to prepare for conferences. We also need to finish installing the heat in our new washing station to have happy workers.

UPDATE FROM THE UVM PLANT DIAGNOSTIC CLINIC – Ann Hazelrigg

For some good info on harvesting and curing potatoes, use of low tunnels for overwintering vegetables and other pest info go to

https://ag.umass.edu/sites/ag.umass.edu/files/newsletters/september_17_2015_vegetable_notes.pdf

In general now is the time for harvest, curing and storage. As nights are getting colder, pumpkins can be damaged by temps below 50 F so if they are ready and orange get them out of the field and protected. Be sure to know the requirements for curing and storage for each of your crops to ensure they last as long as you need them to. Cull at harvest anything that does not look intact/healthy. Ticks should be making an appearance again soon so check yourself after a day in the field.

Brassicas - seeing a lot of *Alternaria* leaf spot (round black spots) and black rot (V-shaped lesions in from the leaf edges) in crops.

Beets/spinach/Swiss chard - Lots of circular leaf spots caused by *Cercospora* spp. plus leafminer damage.

Cucurbit s- Received a sample of Phytophthora fruit rot on spaghetti squash. This soil borne disease is usually triggered when soils remain saturated for 24 hrs. The grower felt the infection occurred earlier in the season when it was wet and then got moved to other squash fields by walking through infected fields before it was noticed. The pathogen can also move on wind-dispersed spores that are present on infected fruit. Symptoms look like a water-soaked spot on the fruit followed by yeasty looking spores. It often shows up in low parts of the field or wetter areas. If you notice it in a low area, you can till under infected fruit/plants asap to limit air borne spread. Don't move the infested/contaminated equipment to a healthy fields of squash, tomatoes, eggplant, peppers or beans. No one good control, just soil drainage management, some cultivar selections and limit of spread. <https://ag.umass.edu/fact-sheets/cucurbits-phytophthora-blight>

Tomato - All the hot dry weather has certainly slowed down late blight. I suspect it will pick back up with the cool nights, fogs and dews. There is also a lot of scorch out there on leaf edges of tomatoes due to the dry conditions. Leaf mold (yellow spots on leaf surface, velvety brown underneath) still a problem in high tunnels. Alternaria and septoria common. Seeing some two-spotted spider mites in high tunnels due to hot dry conditions.

Potato - Scabby potatoes are appearing on some cultivars at harvest. Potato scab lesions are variable: russet (superficial corky tissue), erumpent (a raised corky area), and pitted (a shallow-to-deep hole) scab are all caused by the same pathogen. Soils that are compacted, have poor soil structure, and are low in organic matter, tend to have higher incidence of scab. The pathogen is in all soils. Avoid harvesting potatoes during wet weather since it can lead to enlarged lenticels allowing other pathogens to move in.

http://vegetablemndonline.ppath.cornell.edu/factsheets/Potato_Scab.htm

Eggplant - If you see a wilting or severely scorched plant in the field (also tomato, pepper) it may be due to Verticillium wilt. Cut deep into the stem tissue at a slanted angle and you will see the diagnostic browning in the vascular system. This is the soil borne fungus plugging up the water-conducting vessels. Grafting onto Vert. resistant tomato rootstocks is a good solution, however, the disease does not usually present that widespread of a problem.

<https://ag.umass.edu/fact-sheets/solanaceous-verticillium-wilt>

Garlic/onions - Check drying bulbs for any evidence of onion leek moth larvae. We found some very tiny ones in garlic cloves sent to the clinic last week. To minimize any fungal rots keep up good air circulation with fans to facilitate drying.

<http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/crops/facts/08-009.htm>

Saw some surface staining on garlic caused by superficial fungi. Cloves underneath were sound.

Small Fruit - Lots of SWD larvae (never say maggots) in untreated blueberries and raspberries. Received a call from a home gardener growing day-neutral strawberries with a lot of larvae.