



Peter Briggs and Julian Post Champlain Valley Hops

On a Starksboro farm that was formerly a dairy, Champlain Valley Hops has transformed land that used to grow corn and hay with trellising and irrigation. It is late July 2019, and the land is now growing seven varieties of hops in their 26 acre hop yard and 20 acres of hemp.

At Champlain Valley Hops, Peter Briggs and Julian Post have partnered business savvy and hop & hemp production experience. Speaking with Julian about these crops, he draws on a wealth of knowledge and skills, including 3 years working in research and production as a member of the UVM Extension Northwest Crops & Soils team.

To establish their hop yard, they purchased hop rhizomes from Michigan, and their hop yard now includes seven different varieties of hops. While most alpha varieties of hops yield greater quantities, perhaps around 2500-2800# per acre, Champlain Valley Hops grows aroma or dual-purpose varieties, focusing on producing hops for Vermont-style IPA. They recognize that local brewers would really like to have consistent quality, locally grown hops in sufficient quantities to meet their needs. Julian estimates a yield of about 1400# per acre and noted variation in the performance of the different varieties. He continues to explore which varieties do best on their land and under their management.



With limited machinery options available, they had to extend their search for the specialized equipment required. They ended up finding a mechanical cultivator for their hops that came from Poland. Julian is also applying integrated pest management practices to moderate pest damage and help support optimum production. They anticipate harvesting in August and into September.



There has been an explosion of new interest in hemp in Vermont. Hemp's inclusion in the 2018 Farm Bill and new potential for this commodity has sparked growers who never considered this crop before. Nevertheless, Champlain Valley Hops is not a newcomer to this crop, and they already had hemp in their farm plan. They purchased seeds from Massachusetts and Oregon, and using a water wheel transplanter, planted their hemp mid to late June. They anticipate harvesting the 3rd week in September.

through the 2nd week in October. Champlain Valley Hops will be working with different processors to extract the oil and have already identified options for marketing their crop.



Julian identified excessive moisture as the greatest risk to these crops. They can utilize mulching, plastic and irrigation for dry conditions, but too much precipitation poses a threat. Though the crops are sited on land that appears to be relatively “high and dry”, chronic wet conditions can cause extensive damage.

Both hops and hemp are costly crops to produce, so many growers are interested in being able to obtain insurance coverage. For the 2020 crop, producers can obtain crop insurance for hops and hemp with Whole Farm Revenue Protection (WFRP), insurance that is available through USDA Risk Management Agency (RMA). USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) will be adding hemp to the list of crops that are eligible for 2020 NAP disaster assistance. RMA is also currently developing a Multi-Peril Crop Insurance product.



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