



Vermont Vegetable and Berry News – January 14, 2014  
compiled by Vern Grubinger, University of Vermont Extension  
(802) 257-7967 ext. 303, [vernon.grubinger@uvm.edu](mailto:vernon.grubinger@uvm.edu)  
[www.uvm.edu/vtvegandberry](http://www.uvm.edu/vtvegandberry)

## REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

(Warren) Still harvesting miner's lettuce (Claytonia) from high tunnels. I used to hate harvesting winter greens because my hands would get cold; now with that new Johnny's harvester it's kind of a no brainer. Pretty much sold out of root crops; just parsnips and carrots left. I am looking real hard at wash house efficiency again this winter. Last season saw the improvement of putting basically everything I could think of on casters and the return on investment was super easy to see. Nobody likes the wash house so from a morale perspective we try not to spend any more time than we have to in there.

(Benson) I've been thinking about how long it takes to develop a good working winter production system. We've been at the winter growing for eight years or so and each year is very different. We assess our successes and failures and decide what to do different next time. The only problem is that we have to wait a whole year to try again. This is what makes it interesting and challenging. Maybe ten more years and we'll have it figured out. At any rate, this winter has been very good. Markets are strong. Demand for greens and other good food is growing, and I believe our year 'round winter market in Rutland has helped to fuel demand for folks that simply do not want to go to the store for vegetables any more. A 52-week market never lets customers down and they make it a weekly trip. Lots of kale, chard, Asian greens and chard from the high tunnel. The radiant heat has been especially important this winter to preserve quality and provide at least some opportunity for plant growth. I plan to run the radiant for only three more weeks or so and then let the sun do its thing. Low tunnels and minis have been OK. We usually find one day a week to uncover and harvest during the 2 or 3 hours available this time of year. Enjoying the winter schedule and routine; not looking forward to spring just yet.

(Huntington) Winter wholesale and retail markets have been steady or up slightly; the problem is we're running out of produce. After a few nights in the -17F range, kale in high tunnel (double poly w/inflation, no row cover, gable vent open except on very cold nights) still looks great, though most the harvestable leaves have been picked at this point. Winter squash stored better than expected, though not as well as in an ideal season.

Overall I'm pleased with how well things have kept, given the disease pressure that was out in the fields this summer. We are expanding our climate-controlled storage capacity this winter to help alleviate the fall space crunch and improve packing house work flow. I'm a little disappointed that organic producers are going to have to go through yet another season without biodegradable plastic mulch; as much as I like having a dumpster, filling it up weekly with plastic mulch during August and September is a chore I would love to do without.

(Rochester) Raspberry root stock has been ordered. We will be putting in half an acre of Prelude, whose summer crop should be early enough to be mostly ahead of the SWD buildup, and whose fall fruit should ripen after our nights are cool enough to slow it down, and we will pick the fruit ahead of spoilage.

(Little Compton RI) We got started late on planting our houses this October due to shortage in help but we did have someone start some plugs of various items. They kept us on track quite well and we are not too far off our production schedule. Salanova is doing well and taking the cold and disease pressure quite well. The dog in the houses are the Hakkurie Turnips. They really seem to be shutting down and the voles are running free and wild under the canopy and nibbling all the way. Yukina is still a great crop; I can't give it away in September but last week we sold 60 bags in the first hour and a half at the Saturday market. Our big purchase this season will be a five-row 3 point hitch setup of the Jang precision seeder. We also intend to get into banker and trap crop plants for our greenhouses, which sound promising. In general, markets are decidedly weaker this winter; I don't know why. I hear it the same all around New England.

(Argyle NY) It was a challenging fall with getting the high tunnels seeded and planted, but they are producing fairly well. We have been harvesting Salanova heads of lettuce from outside until 2 weeks ago. They were fine in a small 14'x100' tunnel with 3 layers of rowcover on them at 12 below zero. High tunnel harvesting of salad mix just started this past week with the salad mix lettuce being a perfect size and the August 15 seeded Salanovas being ready as well for salad mix. Both types will regrow. Some of our favorite salad mix varieties this winter are: Blade, Refugio, Spock, Sulu, Bolsachica, Gaviota and Eerostar. There has been no downy mildew at all; only one drenching of Root Shield Plus and Actinovate was done shortly after seeding. Swiss chard is small due to the lack of sun and real cold temps and the spinach is very slow to produce as well. Kale is doing well out of a small 20'x100' tunnel that was thrown over fall-planted beds, and then row covered. Our markets are slower this winter but are matching our supplies with the extreme cold. We are still looking for winter/2014 interns who are excited about being farmers!

(Weare NH) Greens are growing ever so slowly in the tunnel under remay. The cold damaged some lettuce and arugula. Spinach and most lettuce looks good. Caterpillar tunnels not fairing as well as last year, more damage from the ice and snow. Think I'm going to start using metal tubing instead of the PVC tubing I've used the last 3 winters. Working on a whole farm irrigation plan and hope to have a better handle on watering this year. Less of a patchwork system. Also expanding my seed starting capacity by 2/3 so I can do more of my own onions instead of purchasing them. I have calculated it will cost me about half as much if I do them myself. Reviewing notes and lessons from last year in the hopes of being more efficient and productive this year.

### **YOUR FEEDBACK NEEDED ON VT VEGETABLE AND BERRY EXTENSION PROGRAMS**

Please take 5 minutes to do a short evaluation of this newsletter, the vegetable and berry grower web site, and a few other resources for growers. Your input is very important to me! In and out-of-state responses are welcome. <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/VernsEvaluation>

### **JOIN VT VEGETABLE AND BERRY GROWERS ASSN. AND/OR ATTEND ANNUAL MEETING**

If you would like to be on the listserv in 2014, join the VVBGA! Dues are \$25 per farm per year, \$30 after Jan. 23. This link also lets you register for the annual meeting on January 27 in Montpelier. See: <https://2014vvbga.eventbrite.com>

### **STAY INFORMED ABOUT PRACTICAL PRODUCE SAFETY CLASSES**

Ginger Nickerson, UVM Extension Produce Safety Coordinator will be offering day-long workshops on writing a produce safety plan for your farm, in late February and early March. Workshops are planned for Chittenden, Orleans, Bennington, and Lamoille Counties. If you are not on Ginger's e-mail list and would like to learn about these workshops, e-mail her at: [gnickers@uvm.edu](mailto:gnickers@uvm.edu) or call: 802-505-8189.

### **PETITION TO KEEP THE SOIL IN ORGANIC GROWING**

(by Dave Chapman, Longwind Farm, E. Thetford VT)

Many of us have been growing tomatoes in greenhouse soil for many years. Some of us have been organic, some not, but all of us have achieved success through taking good care of the soil and maintaining organic matter. In recent years I have been dismayed to see more and more hydroponic tomatoes coming on the market with organic certification. As I researched this, I discovered that the National Organic Program (NOP) is allowing hydroponic growing to be certified as organic.

I also discovered that the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB), which is charged with representing the growers and consumers in guiding the decisions of the NOP, made a formal recommendation to ban hydroponic production three years ago. This recommendation is in agreement with the organic standards of most of the rest of the world.

I have started two petitions (one for organic growers and one for everyone else) to protest the erosion of the national organic standards. I have worked hard for many years to grow the best organic vegetables that I could. In recent years, there has been real erosion of the standards, as the government has allowed hydroponically grown vegetables, mostly from Mexico, to become certified organic. Hydroponically grown means without soil, so all the nutrients are mixed in a tank and supplied through irrigation. I disagree with calling this organic. It is in opposition to the principles of organic growing, which are based on the idea, "feed the soil, not the plant." How can you do that if there is no soil, and no soil life? I hope you can take 30 seconds to sign this petition online. I talked with the head of the NOP, and he believes nobody cares about this. We can change this situation if we raise our voices. Go to: <http://www.keepthesoilinorganic.org/>