



Vermont Vegetable and Berry News – Jan. 15, 2013
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www.uvm.edu/vtvegandberry

VERMONT VEGETABLE AND BERRY GROWERS ASSOCIATION ANNUAL MEETING
Monday Jan. 28, 2013. Capital Plaza Hotel, 100 State Street, Montpelier

- 8:00 Registration, Trade Show, Refreshments
- 9:30 President's Remarks
Andy Jones, Intervale Community Farm, Burlington
- 9:40 Lessons 'From the Field' in 2012
Vern Grubinger, UVM Extension
- 10:00 The Low Down on Low Tunnels at JSF
Christa Alexander, Jericho Settlers Farm,
- 10:20 Swede Midge: Managing a New Pest of Cole Crops
Yolanda Chen, UVM Plant & Soil Science and Andy Jones
- 10:40 Storing Your Crops – Tips and Tools for Success
Chris Callahan, UVM Extension Agricultural Engineer
- 11:00 Spotted Wing Drosophila: What We Know and What to do About It
Richard Cowles, CT Agricultural Experiment Station
- 11:40 Update from Trade Show Representatives on Products and Services
- 12:00 Luncheon and Trade Show
- 1:20 Business Meeting: Election of Officers, etc.
- 1:30 Update from the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets
Chuck Ross, Vermont Secretary of Agriculture
- 1:50 How I Grow and Market Strawberries at Wood's Market Garden
Jon Satz, Brandon
- 2:10 Blights, Mildews and Rots! Diseases to Look for in 2013
Ann Hazelrigg, UVM Plant Diagnostic Lab
- 2:30 Cool Things You Should Know About Bugs
Jon Turmel, Entomologist
- 2:50 My Experience Working with Farmers in Burma
Howard Prussack, High Meadows Farm
- 3:10 On-Farm Trials with Zone Tillage
Richard Hudak, Bob Pomykala, Andy Jones
- 3:30 Adjourn - Trade Show

Registration must be received by Jan. 24 either on-line or by mail; the fee includes morning coffee break and a hot lunch buffet. \$40 VVBGA Members, \$50 all others, add \$10 for walk-ins. VVBGA membership dues for 2013 are \$25 per farm. Benefits include:

- \$10 discount for the Association's annual meeting registration
- Registration waiver for on-farm workshops
- Eligibility for the Association's research grants
- 10% discount on UVM Extension's Vegetable and Berry publications list
- Access to the VVBGA listserv: buy/sell equipment, plants, etc. and share information
- Vermont vegetable and berry grower e-mail newsletter subscription

Register for the annual meeting and/or pay membership dues on-line, <http://vrbgmembership.eventbrite.com/#> Or, print the membership form at: www.uvm.edu/vtvegandberry/VV&BGA/VVBGA_membership_form.pdf and mail it with your check to: VVBGA, PO Box 2091, South Burlington, VT 05407. If also registering for the annual meeting please include a note, with the names of all registrants, and the additional payment for each: \$40 per VVBGA member, \$50 per non-member.

Questions? Vern Grubinger, 802-257-7967 ext. 303, vernon.grubinger@uvm.edu. If you require accommodations to participate in this program, please me know 10 days prior to the event. Attendance at this meeting will be worth 2 pesticide recertification credits for applicators certified in categories 1A, 2, 3, 6 and 10. Sponsored by USDA Risk Management Agency, University of Vermont Extension and the Vermont Vegetable and Berry Growers Association. University of Vermont Extension and the U.S. Department of Agriculture offer education and employment to everyone without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or familial status.

REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

(Westminster West) I am not fooled by the warm and foggy weather we have the last few days! In any event, I have started the official growing season last week with the first of the seed trays getting planted. A weekly tradition for the next 24 weeks, I like doing my seeding on Sundays, a day without too much distraction. The first of the herb seeds go in today. Last week's seeds are already germinating, a bit faster than I had planned, but good news anyways. Doing final clean up chores in all the greenhouses, disinfecting walls and floors. Repairing injectors and starting the trucks and tractors so they will be ready to roll when we really need them. Attending the many workshops all over the state this month, while I still have time. I really love my free time in the winter.

(Shelburne/South Burlington) Glad to be through the very cold spell and looking for some rebound and growth during this "thaw". I am interesting in measuring growth through these coldest, darkest times, but not sure the best way to do that. I am thinking about literally daily measuring the same leaves on a certain number of plants over these 8 weeks of coldest and darkest time. I have observed some growth in my large kale and spinach, but just anecdotal. Some crown mites in my spinach, not sure what to do about them, but doesn't seem to be getting worse and plants seem to be outgrowing them, maybe for now since it is so cold but could get really bad once it is warmer, so I am still worried about them. I am amazed with the difference in climate between my two houses. They are roughly the same size, but different brands and I am seeing very different climate conditions inside them this winter. My new project to figure out why and how to control it more. Looking forward to harvesting in large quantities the kale again soon.

(Wolcott) Snow melting makes me feel behind already! Working on a solid rotational plan to follow, using a variety of covers and trying to implement less tillage. I know it's possible, but timing is everything. Recapping labor costs per pound and comparing to previous years to adjust costs and make decisions on what absolutely not to waste time on. Reaching out to other grower's with questions and not getting responses. Taking a stab at writing a grant proposal, but not feeling smart enough. Checking on seedlings in the high tunnels and hoping they will know to make seed when spring comes. Excited about conferences and networking face to face. Dreaming about dirty hands knees and my farmer's tan. Can't wait to be in the midst of black plastic, hoes and diesel fumes

(Montpelier) January thaw is upon us, with early morning temperature of 40 degrees. Makes working in the houses more pleasant and has allowed us to do a much better job cleaning up the lettuce beds and a bit of cultivating. Running a trial with Verdanta, a new foliar feed from Bioworks. Primarily a mix of urea and chelated Iron. Trying to green up some spinach that was overplanted for the fertility in the bed. Thinking it might work with the warm weather since the plants may actually "wake up" and start photosynthesizing a bit. See what happens over this week. A fair amount of downy and powdery mildew in the lettuce house. Cleaning up excess bad tissue and spraying with Milstop. So far very happy with the running of drip irrigation during the winter. Need to be careful that main line is drained but drip tape is doing fine. Farmers' market sales are down over last year. Mostly due to more growers, more competition. Funny it used to be called the "off season" now it's referred to as the winter season. Still plenty of market for spinach and salad during the winter months so sales remain solid overall. Value added product sales remain strong and are increasing as well. Only 3 more weeks before we are over the winter hump and things start growing in the houses again.

(Rochester) We have pre-paid for the plants that will go in this spring to take advantage of Nourse's early-pay discount. We have two Workamper couples lined up for the 2013 season and are still hopeful of getting a third soon through our current ad in Workamper News. Each couple works 240 hours during the picking season in exchange for a full-hookup RV site on our beautiful farm for up to four months. The breakdown of the Campagnola Tronic Star pruner is apparently serious and repairs may run more than half what we paid for it. I am hoping the company helps us out and stands by their product which, though out of warranty, is only 3 seasons old.

(Grand Isle) We are using our break from crops to catch up on paperwork, machinery repair, and painting several pieces of equipment. Our Tew wash line was all apart anyway to replace overly worn bearings so the whole thing was sanded down and painted at the same time. Two things we would suggest for anyone doing projects in their shop. One is epoxy primer and epoxy paint for sprucing up farm machinery. We have a Ford tractor that was painted 35 years ago and the paint is still looking great. The other item is spray on bed liner for beefing up thin spots in metal. We plan to seed down our first tomato seeds and root stock seeds under grow lights the third week in January. This thaw has been great for cleaning the creosote out of the stove pipe and finding the few items that failed to be put away before the snow fell. We do however miss the snow for the sake of the berries which were well covered by straw mulch and a foot or so of the white stuff.

(Williston) Waiting anxiously for the magic 10 hour day. We just made it to over 9 hours in the past few days. My hoop house is just waiting to spring into action with cilantro, sage, tarragon, thyme. Can't wait to put all the info I learned into practice that I learned at the High Tunnel conference in December. The wind has been relentless here at the farm and almost had the hoop house blow away. Have it under control now but was amazed at how strong the winds got and how the direction of wind makes a huge difference. We do not get wind from the east often and not usually that strong gusts. Just got my NOFA bulk order in the mail today along with all the seed catalogs that have been coming the last few months. Direct Market conference in South Royalton was great with lots of good info and I was still able to get home and see most of the Patriots game! Looking forward to the NOFA winter conference.

(Abington CT) Gearing up for a first season in a new State. Greens are thriving in a small trial house, we are still harvesting turnips and radishes as well. Renting half a greenhouse for propagation, struggling with where to build our own for 2014 propagation. Hoping for more cold weather to kill off pests brought up from the south with Irene.

(Hampton NY) Soil test is back for the new garden. Fertility is low to good and the pH is low so the ashes from the woodstove are heading to the garden and a plan to micro fertilize is being developed. The main seed order has been placed for the veggies with just a few stragglers left to be ordered. There was quite a bit of interest in the garden sunflowers and zinnias last summer so we have decided to expand into cut flowers and see how that goes. There is a new farmers market in Rutland called the Market Place and it sounds like it will be a good fit for us. We still haven't decided on a game camera for surveillance of the roadside stand.

(Little Compton RI) January is a great time for winter production. It always amazes me how folks' tastes change and the dogs of one season become the produce of choice in another. We get nothing but scrunched up noses when we offer CSA and the general public green cabbage, bok choy, kolhrabi in September. But come January we sell a hundred of each at every market and no scrunched up noses! We doubled our Swiss chard production this year and it is flying out of the house so fast that we already decided to plant one whole house to it next year to keep customers satisfied. Ditto with Spinach. Another green enjoying this surge is Yukina Savoy, which the Japanese prefer for their winter greens fix. Another lesson this year is to remember to open up the seeds per foot spacing on a number of winter greens and roots. Our Crunchy Royal Radishes are way too close, not maturing well and getting snotty from lack of air. This also is true for direct seeded Yukina Savoy, MeiQuig Bok Choi, Siberian Kale etc. So last week we tore out some leggy Romaine and direct seeded some of the above. We'll experiment with seeding density, now that we are on the other side of the solstice, to see if we can go back to tighter seedings.

One last tip: The recent sudden drop in temperatures caught us off guard and we were forced to make some quick decisions about how to protect our investments. We decided that two layers of Covertan .30 oz. would protect down to 18 degrees but they were predicting 9 or below. Instead of rolling out another large piece of Covertan we found a special heater thermostat at Graingers that actually works between 0-110 F. It has an extendable remote heat sensor so it reads the ambient greenhouse temp as well. We set it at 15 degrees and I watch my greenhouse indicator light go on for about three hours in the early morning that fateful series of days. This way we didn't have to add another layer of cover and not need it for the rest of the winter. The call number for the Grainger thermostat is 2NNR6. It is a 24 volt thermostat. Retail for \$56 and is made of hard plastic.

(Plainfield NH) Time is spent cutting brush and taking down tricky trees around powerlines. On a newly acquired 20 acre field we calculate that our efforts cutting the perimeter has netted us an extra 1.5 acres of land, and that's a lot of potato or bean ground.

Our real hurdle at that site is trying to get someone to come in and do a horizontal bore under the railroad tracks and a State road so we can get irrigation lines into the field. At home we have been putting up a ceiling and enclosed florescent fixtures in the washing and packing area, which seems like a better idea now than when we originally planned doing it, since new food safety regs are coming. Slowly we have been finding the back of our shop as we get some maintenance done on our aging collection of machinery. The house is a mess of file folders and catalogs which Anne is trying to sort through and organize as she changes the business end of things from 2012 to 2013. In the greenhouses I am getting ornamentals seeded, cuttings on the heat bench and hoping that the tomato rootstocks show up here pretty soon. Have a little too healthy population of thrips and foxglove aphids overwintering in the stock plant house that am trying to deal with biologically; the verdicts are still out on that. Outside, we lament the loss of the snow; it was fun having a winter for the two weeks that it was here, but now we are worrying that the loss of snow cover will bring the deer and turkeys back to work the strawberries over, as well as bring more dramatic off-season soil temp fluctuations.