



Vermont Vegetable and Berry News – January 15, 2020
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DEADLINES FOR VVBGA STUFF

The deadline to pre-register for the Jan. 27 VVBGA Annual Meeting is Jan. 24. After that, the fee increases by \$10. Deadline for early VVBGA farm membership renewal is Jan. 31. After that the fee per farm increases by \$10. Save \$20 and do both today!

To join the VVBGA, register for the annual meeting, enroll in CAPS, and/or make a donation to the research and extension fund please visit: <https://vvbga2020.eventbrite.com>, or you can write down in detail what you are paying for and mail with a check to: P.O. Box 66, Barton, VT 05822. Checks must be received by January 24 if they include annual meeting registrations.

Thank you to our Annual Meeting sponsors: Vitalis Organic Seeds, High Mowing Organic Seeds, Vermont Compost Company, Johnny's Selected Seeds, the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, and UVM Extension for helping to keep the meeting fees low. Fees include breakfast snacks and a good lunch. We have 27 great exhibitors for the trade show this year.

VEGETABLE NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT WORKSHOPS

UVM Extension and the VVBGA are hosting free workshops for commercial growers of all types and scales aimed at improving soil health practices both in the field and in high tunnels. By the end of an intensive day, growers will: 1) Interpret soil test results, calculate nutrients, and choose soil amendments 2) Learn how to improve high tunnel nutrient management 3) Hear from experienced and innovative farmers sharing their soil health strategies, and 4) Work one-on-one with UVM Extension specialists to develop or improve your RAPS-compliant nutrient management plan. Choose one of the following dates and locations. All workshops are from 9-12:30 with one-on-one technical assistance available from 1-3 pm. Please register at: <https://2020vegnutrientclass.eventbrite.com>

February 12. Intervale Center, Burlington

February 21. Winston Prouty Center, Brattleboro

February 25. Location TBD, Rutland

February 28. Lake Morey Resort, Fairlee

Questions? Contact Becky Maden (802) 773.3349 x 277 or Rebecca.maden@uvm.edu

HIGH TUNNEL TOMATO PROJECT SEEKS GROWERS

We are inviting growers in Vermont and nearby states to participate in a 2-year study to improve our understanding of the fertility needs of high tunnel tomatoes grown in the ground. The project will pay for soil tests at the UMaine lab and provide customized fertilizer recommendations for your tunnel(s). Growers must agree to grow at least one bed of red, indeterminate slicing tomatoes, follow the soil test recommendations, and track yields.

If interested, please review the participant agreement for details:
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1BeBYeFeritaO4GWWBtoI-9u_FecKbfN4/view
and then contact Becky Maden with questions or to sign up, ideally by the end of the month at (802) 773.3349 x 277 or rebecca.maden@uvm.edu.

SPINACH CROWN MITES IN HIGH TUNNELS

Ann Hazelrigg, UVM Plant Diagnostic Clinic

We have had a couple of spinach crown mite samples from high tunnels. These mites are very small and tuck down in the crown so are hard to find without a microscope. If you notice stunting of the new growth in your spinach, send in a sample. According to a factsheet from California, “crown mites may damage sprouting seeds, seedlings before or after emergence, or older plants. They feed primarily on newly expanding leaves at the heart of the plant. Their ability to injure the crop decreases as plants get larger and as plants grow rapidly. The damage appears as deformed leaves or as small holes in expanding leaves.”

See: <https://www2.ipm.ucanr.edu/agriculture/spinach/spinach-crown-mite/>

“The spinach crown mite is most damaging when there are soils high in organic matter and cool moist conditions - plants grow a little more slowly and the mites proliferate in this type of environment. Because these mites can consume organic matter they can survive in soils after the crop has been removed. This is one reason they are difficult to control as they can survive for fairly long periods of time with no crop being present. The other reason they are difficult to ‘control’ is we do not realize they are causing the problem until it is too late,” according to info from UMD.

Some good pictures and more info here:

https://extension.umd.edu/sites/extension.umd.edu/files/_docs/spinach%20crown%20mites.pdf

The good news is that the mites typically do not infest the entire crop, so spot spraying is usually effective with AZA-Direct or Neemix. Fallow periods, good sanitation and rotations will also help. The best thing is to have warmer sunny weather so the spinach can grow faster reducing the impact of the mites and discourage their feeding.

LEEK MOTH RESEARCH UPDATE

Scott Lewins and Vic Izzo, UVM

For an update on our 2019-2020 leek moth research click on the link below where you can view the brief in your browser. You can find a wealth of information on the rest of our projects and educational endeavors on the ALC website. We are always looking to support and collaborate with growers to explore novel ideas and help address issues relevant for building sustainable farming communities here in VT. http://bit.ly/VEPART_brief

UPDATE FROM UVM EXTENSION AG ENGINEERING

Chris Callahan and Andy Chamberlain

Tools Tips & Techniques to Improve the Sustainability of your farm. That's the mission of The Ag Engineering Podcast! In each weekly episode we discuss specific topics with farmers about what works for their farm. So far we've covered cat tunnels, managing multiple types of market streams, forming good habits to manage stress, walk-in coolers, and climate-controlled rooms. Check us out on most major podcast players or visit <http://www.agengpodcast.com>.

TRANSFERRING THE FARM: SUCCESSION PLANNING SEMINARS, 2 LOCATIONS

February 4, Billings Farm, Woodstock VT, 9am-3pm

February 5, Yankee Farm Credit, Williston VT, 9am-3pm

Farmers will receive information and resources for the complex process of succession planning and all that is involved in transferring the farm to a new owner. Seminar is part of a Management Development Seminar Series offered by Yankee Farm Credit. All generations, including family and non-family members, who play a role in the farm's future are encouraged to attend. Topics to be covered: 1) Why succession planning is important! 2) Retirement and estate planning 3) Addressing tax issues in a transfer 4) Legal entities and tools you can use to transfer farm assets 5) Determining your goals for transfer planning & business transition.

Registration is required. The seminar fee is \$25 and includes lunch. Scholarships are available through Yankee Farm Credit. Free to Young, Beginning, Small, Veteran (YBSV) farmers. Email kcoombs@yankeefarmcredit.com or call 800-639-3053 to register.

DISCOUNT FOR VVBGA MEMBERS AT NOFA-VT WINTER CONFERENCE

Members of VVBGA are invited to register for the upcoming Winter Conference, Feb 15-17 at the discounted rate of \$70/day. To access your discount use this special invitation link to register, <http://www.cvent.com/d/nhgyhk/4W> and enter the code: NOFA-VVBGA2020. Join over 1000 farmers, gardeners, homesteaders, change-makers, and organic food enthusiasts for a weekend of learning, inspiration and working together. Learning opportunities for commercial producers include eighty workshops, four full-day intensives, panels, and roundtables. Full schedule and details at www.nofavt.org/conference

REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

(Westminster) The winter greens grown in our hoopouses are doing well, except for kale, which could use a little warm weather to recover from a moisture problem. Spinach, arugula and Asian mix are also sold at our Winter Market.

Root crops did very well this year - yields were much better than in 2018 - so we put lots in storage. We have plenty of carrots and beets still to pack out, along with rutabagas, turnips, and radishes, which are moving more slowly. Our parsnips and celeriac are moving out quickly, and we are at the bottom end of our squash in storage.

Planning is well underway for the upcoming growing season. We won't make too many changes in the crop mix, except for adding more celeriac. Celeriac is a touchy crop that is susceptible to disease problems, but it grew well in last year's dry weather. We'll gamble on it again this year. We also plan on buying a new, state-of-the-art-root vegetable washing and packing line, long overdue!

(Orwell) Winter is passing too quickly, with not enough time for projects, planning, relaxing, and fun. Since Thanksgiving, winter greens harvests have been sporadic, even though the appetite for greens is strong this time of year. Aphids came in to our Salanova a few weeks ago so we are releasing lady bugs and hope that they will eat them right up. Excited to order seeds, try some new varieties, and dream about next season, while still hoping for some good snow and skiing.

(Burlington) We discovered symphylans feeding on winter spinach in our tunnels last week. Oh joy. These tiny centipede-like creatures move through the soil in channels created by other organisms, and can be serious trouble in high organic matter, cool, damp environments -- sounds like a winter tunnel is perfect! While I haven't assessed the extent of our problems yet, it would help explain several confounding problems we've had in our winter tunnels. A few Vermont growers have reported similar problems and symphylans are a big problem inside and outside in cooler Western farms. Yuck.

On a brighter note, our storage crops are holding very nicely in general, affirming how much it matters to have a dry autumn for quality in winter squash, cabbage, and many root crops. We did have a couple of pallets parked for a couple of months in our warmer (38-40 F.) potato cooler when our low temperature coolers at 32-33 F. were full, and it reinforced again how important that lower temperature is, when we saw lots of the tops begin to sprout. As if we didn't know, but it seems like I have to remind myself of things I already know each season. Go figure.

(Plainfield NH) Weather is the big question as we have been seeing wild temp fluctuations since mid-November. With low light levels and short days, I am not particularly concerned about breaking dormancy on bramble crops, and the warm temps have allowed those of us whom are behind on blueberry pruning an opportunity to catch up.

I know that the temp fluctuations are raising Cain with apiarists around here; one reported a loss of 6 hives out of 21 already. Hoping there is not some subtle physiological weirdness being exacted on our crops, and I do hate to see the strawberry mulch snowless this time of year.

Still packing out the remains of the potato and root crops. Putting up new greenhouses as well as rebuilding doors and endwalls on the myriad of 30-year old houses. Five-day weeks feel like vacation, so we are all slowly recharging, and all hope to get "outta here" to either a better snow venue or a place where the water is warmer. In the greenhouse we continue to seed long season annuals and stick vegetative cuttings for March potting. There is still a long list of things to be repaired and straightened away (like "fix cooler door" or "new signage" as well as review and update our training manuals on CAPS, FSMA, WPS before the growing season gets underway.

The Tristate IPM Workshops held in January every year in NH, ME and V really should be on every grower's list of things to do. If you are interested in biological controls at any level, you should make sure you attend, and especially if you are a high tunnel grower. This past meeting was full of exciting stuff that is so important to what we do, and our Northeastern EXT folks have done yeoman's work putting it together and taking it on the road to 3 states to present it.

(Argyle NY) The greens in the tunnels are waning in volume due to an earlier start this year and heavy demand with very busy farmers' markets. Some of the salad mix slump is also due to some powdery mildew and downy mildew we have on some of the varieties. This new DM is going to be a challenge since it's not tested on any and we will have to painstakingly figure it out ourselves. Root crops are equally moving out but we have a lot of them. Only thing really low is garlic due to last spring's wet weather that rotted it. First time in 20 years. No grand plans for new equipment this year just figuring out how to get smaller and enjoy. Hoping others join in growing winter greens to help with the demand as they are very lucrative.

(Salisbury NH) Noticed with our newer, larger hoop house (unheated like the other ones) the snow tends to stay on longer which creates shade. It becomes a spiraling effect as it slows down the sun heating up the house. It also seems like our winters have been cloudier than in the past. The head lettuces planted in the fall have held pretty well in the unheated hoop house under two rows of row cover. We only take it off if it is sunny. The red Rouxai lettuce from Johnny's holds up much better than the green heads; both Sparx Romaine and Nancy and Adriana heads, right next to red heads, are going down. Spinach is fine except here come the voles! How do people with houses full of greens fight this battle?

We added a 55-gal. plastic drum in the hoop house so we could do the little watering needed in winter. It has worked pretty well. Ice has formed but mostly thin enough to break up. This saves dragging a hose out to the hoop house. Seeds are ordered and mostly received. Trying a few new things this year - celeriac and radicchio. We tarped for the first time last year and it seemed to be helpful. Looking forward to a full season of moving tarp around. Worked much better than solarization as we couldn't get the plastic held down tight enough to generate enough heat to kill weeds. We're ready to start the new season.