



Vermont Vegetable and Berry News – January 26, 2015  
compiled by Vern Grubinger, University of Vermont Extension  
(802) 257-7967 ext. 303, vernon.grubinger@uvm.edu  
[www.uvm.edu/vtvegandberry](http://www.uvm.edu/vtvegandberry)

## REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

(Grand Isle) A portion of the interior of our home now resembles a makeshift greenhouse as we are trying to wait until the last possible moment to start heating the actual greenhouses. Maxifort tomato rootstock appears to be way ahead of Estimino on emergence. This may make our grafting to chosen scions challenging due to stem size. I am not sure what we would do without January--the perfect time to tackle paperwork, inventory lists, grandiose plans, machinery maintenance, painting projects, and those glossy seed catalogues. We have decided to join the bandwagon and replace our hand written invoices for restaurants with a cloud based on-line system. So far, our greenhouses have been spared the wrath of wind and snow load. Wishing all a great new season.

(Williston) Kale in the hoophouse is in deep freeze mode. I had it covered with two layers of 19 Agribon but did not protect it enough. It will bounce back on warmer sunny days but still waiting for those days to appear. I heard talk of less covering of crops in hoophouse so I may experiment with that idea with one row. I seem to have very happy voles living on the hoophouse so time to get out the traps. Not too much damage and only on the smaller plants. Great Veg/Berry conference last week motivated me to start ordering seeds and plants. Great update on pests and diseases of this past year and what to look out for in 2015. Tile drainage talk was something I have always wanted to know more about and now I have a better understanding of different options to improve drainage and soil productivity. I will be trying a few rows of interseeding between raised bed rows with annual ryegrass this year. Drop spreader idea will work well with my size operation. Looking forward to the Farm Show in Essex VT this week and NOFA in February. My trip this year took me to India where agriculture is a whole different scene. Lots of monoculture and lots of chemicals being sprayed with little or no PPE!

(Shrewsbury) Lots of potatoes and onions in storage, but not having ideal storage conditions for squash led to more spoilage than we'd like. We're looking forward to building a room with the right conditions to store squash this coming year. We've been mostly disappointed with the growth of greens in our tunnels and although we're excited for the days to get longer, we really appreciate this slower time of the year for the opportunity to focus on other things. It's nice to get a little break from being consumed by vegetable production, marketing, and crew management!

(Dummerston) An ongoing battle with the voles in the high tunnel has me thinking back to the post-harvest conference presentations - would hardware cloth really keep them out or would they chew through plastic elsewhere? Spinach in a caterpillar tunnel is also a failed experiment because of voles – it's just not practical to crawl in there often enough to keep them in check. I'm thinking of taking on fewer winter CSA members next year (or none) and selling more at the winter farmers' market - more flexibility and less pressure to maintain a diverse mix of produce all winter. All kinds of ideas and tips from the conference: thinking of streamlining and cleaning up the wash area, planting annual ryegrass between plastic mulch, and using fans to dry garlic better for longer storage. Great ideas for weeding equipment and storage facilities too, but my wish list is now far bigger than my farm budget.

(Burlington) I had a great time at the VVBGA winter meetings. I came away with several interesting things to try in weed control, harvest, and storage realms. Haven't had quite enough sun or warmth to making timing spinach harvest out of our 14-foot tunnels easy, but the 32-footers will be a piece of cake, as they have only frozen occasionally. Wishing for snow, but happy to feel the longer days.

(Fairfax) Carrot washing is keeping us busy three days a week. Always nice having product to sell in Feb. and March. Quality is still quite good with little shrinkage but I know that will likely change once we get into March. Great conference in Fairlee. Always impressed at how innovative growers in Vermont are. I really enjoy hearing about what our growers are doing. Lots of great ideas to try and replicate on our farm.

(Westminster West) First seeds are coming up in plug trays and transplanting plugs into pots begins tomorrow. It feels like I haven't had a break at all this winter before it all starts again. Had a great VVGBA show in Fairlee last week. Meeting with buyers next week at my top accounts and if this year is as good as last year I will be happy.

(Harborside ME) Since there are more than enough summer growers in our area, we decided last spring to specialize in winter and only sell from September to May. Our one large non-moveable greenhouse which used to grow tomatoes, peppers and eggplants could therefore take the summer off. So we decided to solarize the soil in there by irrigating to wet the soil, laying down plastic on the soil from edge to edge, and shutting up the house from mid-July to mid-August. We used soil thermometers to make sure we hit 145 degrees F at the 2-inch depth. The result this winter is the most weed-free greenhouse I have ever experienced. Our other large greenhouses, all moveable, grew summer crops of sweet potatoes and paste tomatoes (which we freeze whole and sell at winter markets) but we are thinking now that they could be moved off those crops in mid-July (we would need to grow non-staking tomatoes) to solarize the next door plot that will be in winter crops.

We want to use solarization on our outdoor fields also before fall planted crops and so this summer we are planning on moving our cathedral greenhouses (three 14-foot wide sections make a 50-foot house) sideways progressively across a field (and hopefully only needing to leave them for two weeks so we could get three moves from July 7 to August 21.

(Little Compton RI) I received a number of emails about my listserv comment on ‘some’ evidence from growers that in 2014 that Entrust was not giving significant control of CPB on their potatoes. Someone said they had some success putting in beds of buckwheat as an insectary to pull in predators to do battle with CPB. They claimed that they got the idea from Eric Nordell one of the most respected organic growers in the Northeast. I then came across a Cornell study that said that the idea had marginal efficacy: [http://rvpadmin.cce.cornell.edu/uploads/doc\\_39.pdf](http://rvpadmin.cce.cornell.edu/uploads/doc_39.pdf).

Other folks are working on getting Novodor (an older formula of Bt encapsulated in a UV resistant carrier) that we used to use, and it worked well. I understand MOFGA is communicating with the French manufacturer to see if they can get an inert ingredient replaced with something that the NOP can allow. Meanwhile I plan to try the buckwheat next summer – what’s not to like about having a good cover crop/insectary close at hand? At least our bees will be happy!

Starting our greenhouse tomatoes this week and the Maxiforts are as vigorous as ever! I will be starting them two days later than the scions for our April plantings. I am thinking of using Estimato for grafting our eggplants. Maxiforte is just too vigorous and it creates elephant-sized leaves that take up too much room in the greenhouse. I used to use the less vigorous Beaufort but it is no longer available. Had a great time at Lake Morey! How did I forget my skates!

**SLIDE PRESENTATIONS FROM VVBGA MEETINGS ARE POSTED**

The 2015 Annual Meeting:

<http://www.uvm.edu/vtvegandberry/VVBGAMeeting2015Presentations.html>

The Post-Harvest Handling of Vegetables Conference:

<http://www.uvm.edu/vtvegandberry/PostHarvestConference2015.html>

**A FEW DAYS LEFT TO JOIN VVBGA FOR \$35 PER FARM**

After Jan. 30 the VVBGA membership dues will increase to \$45 per farm. To pay on-line go to <http://2015vvbga.eventbrite.com>, or you can print the membership form then mail it in with your check: [www.uvm.edu/vtvegandberry/VV&BGA/VVBGA\\_membership\\_form.pdf](http://www.uvm.edu/vtvegandberry/VV&BGA/VVBGA_membership_form.pdf).

## VEGETABLE PRODUCTION COURSE FOR NEWER GROWERS

The VVBGA is sponsoring this in-depth, affordable and unique opportunity for new and early career farmers to learn from a remarkable group of experienced growers in Vermont. Tim Taylor of Crossroad Farm has put the highly practical curriculum together and will lead the 8-week course that will be held on Mondays from 10-1 in the Berlin Extension office, with a field trip at the end of the course. People should register ASAP as classes begin Feb. 2 and space is limited. More info at: <http://www.uvm.edu/vtvegandberry/meetings/SustVegCourse2015.pdf>

## DIGITAL RECORD KEEPING AND LABELING FOR PRODUCE GROWERS

Produce growers: please complete a survey to help this project design the right solution(s) for you. The goal of this project is to research, select, and pilot test an affordable, easy to implement, and easy to use digital traceability solutions for Vermont produce growers, in order to meet FDA and market-enforced food traceability requirements. All completed surveys will be entered into a \$250 Raffle! The survey link is on the project homepage <http://bit.ly/vtproduce>. Questions? Contact: Stan Ward, [stan@stanward.com](mailto:stan@stanward.com) or 802-595-3232.

## PRACTICAL FOOD SAFETY WORKSHOPS FOR GROWERS IN FEBRUARY

Reminder, this one-day event is offered at 5 locations: St Johnsbury Feb.18, White River Jct. Feb. 19, Swanton Feb. 20. Poultney Feb. 23, and Middlebury Feb. 24. Registration closes February 9. Cost is \$18 for first registrant, \$10 per additional person from same farm. Growers from neighboring states are welcome! More info and registration at: <http://go.uvm.edu/-b2il>.

## LOW COST OR NO-COST CROP DISASTER INSURANCE: DEADLINE MARCH 15

The 2014 Farm Bill offers new opportunities for fruit and vegetable growers to mitigate financial risk through an enhanced Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program. NAP now offers catastrophic levels of protection to beginning farmers (farming for 10 years or less), socially disadvantaged individuals (including women and minorities), and limited resource producers at NO COST! These fees normally amount to \$250 per crop, with a maximum of \$750 for three or more crops (grown in the same county). Payments at the catastrophic level of coverage kick in once you suffer a greater than 50% loss of production, with payments calculated at 55% of the established crop price. Higher levels of coverage are available, up to 65% of production at 100% of price, with premiums applying. Those producers eligible for catastrophic levels of coverage at no cost also get a 50% reduction on their premiums for the higher levels of coverage. The application deadline for covering vegetable crops is March 15, 2015. Please contact your county's Farm Service Agency office for more details:

Addison: 388-6748. Caledonia and Essex: 748-2641 or 800-862-1121. Chittenden and Washington: 288-8155 or 800-910-2035. Franklin and Grand Isle: 527-1296 or 800-717-8637. Lamoille: 888-4935. Orleans: 334-6090 or 866-241-2190. Rutland and Bennington: 775-8034 or 800-300-6927. Windham: 254-9766. Windsor and Orange: 295-7942 or 800- 789-6713.