



Vermont Vegetable and Berry News – January 30, 2018
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www.uvm.edu/vtvegandberry

DON'T GET BUMPED OFF THE VVBGA LISTSERV!

Please renew your membership now. Dues increase by \$10 after January 31. It's a lot of work for the Secretary to take names off the list and then put them back on if you renew later. Go to: <https://2018vvbga.eventbrite.com> or mail in the membership form with your check: <http://www.uvm.edu/vtvegandberry/VV&BGA/2018MembershipPlusMeeting.pdf>

VVBGA ANNUAL MEETING PRESENTATIONS

Eleven presentations from the Jan. 22 meeting on blueberry production, farm transfer, pest management, leek moth, greenhouse IPM, NEWA weather stations and more are posted at: <http://www.uvm.edu/vtvegandberry/VVBGAMeeting2018Presentations.html>

NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT WORKSHOPS FOR VEGETABLE FARMS

This informative, fun, and FREE workshop, offered at 5 locations from 9am-4 pm, is for produce farms of all sizes to help you comply with Vermont's Required Agricultural Practices (RAPs).

- Learn how the RAPs apply to your farm, and what you need to do;
- Understand the impact excess nutrients have on the environment;
- Interpret soil test results, calculate nutrient needs, and choose soil amendments;
- Draft a RAPs-compliant nutrient management plan!

February 9—Brattleboro (UVM Extension, 130 Austine Dr.)

February 23—Lake Morey (Lake Morey Resort)

February 26—Burlington (Main Street Landing, 60 Lake Street)

March 2—Rutland (UVM Extension, 271 N. Main St.)

March 16—Morrisville (River Arts, 74 Pleasant St.)

Questions? Rebecca.Maden@uvm.edu or call 802.773.3349 x277. Register at: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/vegetablenutrient-management-class-tickets-42301994404>

Coffee, snacks, and lunch included. Sponsored by: UVM Extension's Northwest Crops and Soils Team, Vegetable and Berry Team, and Center for Sustainable Agriculture; NRCS; and the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food, and Markets.

TREE FRUIT GROWERS ANNUAL MEETING

The 122nd Annual UVM Apple Program and Vermont Tree Fruit Growers Association educational meeting will be held on Thursday, Feb. 15 at the American Legion Hall in Middlebury. The focus this year is on insect management in Vermont orchards including traditional pest insects and how to monitor them, trunk-boring insects, and native pollinators. There will also be presentations on FSMA, crop insurance, and cider apple research. The full agenda is at: <http://go.uvm.edu/2018applemtg>, register at: <http://go.uvm.edu/2018applereg> Early registration deadline is February 4. Questions? Terence.Bradshaw@uvm.edu

NOFA-VT WINTER CONFERENCE

Join 1100 farmers, gardeners, homesteaders and organic food enthusiasts on Feb. 17-19 at UVM for a weekend of learning, inspiration, good food and great conversation. Interested in learning more about marketing or diversifying your farm with cut flowers or hemp? Sign up for a day-long intensive. Pre-registration ends Feb. 12. Questions? 802-434-4122 for full program see: <https://nofavt.org/events/winter-conference-feb-17-19-2018>

GROWING ALLIUMS FOR STORAGE AND LONG-TERM SALES

Feb. 8 from 9:30-3:30, Saratoga County Extension, 50 West High St. Ballston Spa, NY. \$35 includes lunch. Topics are growing practices that lead to good storage, tips and tricks for harvest, drying and storage, and audience questions about garlic, leeks, onions, and shallots. Featuring growers Paul and Sandy Arnold, Jeff Bialis, Jean-Paul Courtens, Brian Denison, David Stern, and Leon Vehaba. See: <https://enych.cce.cornell.edu/event.php?id=880>

REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

(Fairfax) Root crop sales are doing well. Carrots are storing well, especially where humidity is high. Starting to do heater maintenance, getting ready to fire up greenhouses in a couple of weeks. Plants are growing well on our heated slab in our basement with HPS lights. Have just lost all our snow cover, so definitely concerned for potential winter injury in strawberries if we don't receive any snow. The ping-pong winter is certainly not ideal for perennial crops.

(Westminster West) Almost finished analyzing last year's performance of each crop and market and what actually adds to our bottom line. A surprise rise in sales from both farmers' markets and the farm stand give me some optimism about growing a diversity of veggie crops, otherwise the low margins experienced from wholesaling veggies will continue to cause us to shrink our focus to a few very profitable crops. Onions, winter squash, bunched carrots, greenhouse tomatoes had great years. Bulk carrots, sweet potatoes, garlic and most root crops while prolific suffer from higher labor costs in almost every stage of production thru final sales. Even though winter squash is profitable it is under attack from increased competition Tunnel cukes and tomatoes and celery will be increased somewhat. Strawberries both in the greenhouse and field do well and some expansion will continue.

We have successfully trained new staff in the exacting methods of tomato grafting! Greenhouse production of grafted tomatoes will stay the same and even though there is great demand, it's a costly venture and not worth the risk to expand in that area. Our potted herb and veggie starts continue to do fine and will experience some growth organically (pun intended) as a few key accounts have announced major expansions, so we go along for the ride! A pivotal year in the future of our farm, I'm starting to get excited!

(Brookline) We need a good accurate definition of 'LOCAL' grown produce. That concern was raised to our Agriculture Secretary at our recent meeting in Lake Fairlee. In 2017, Canadian - grown strawberries dominated the southern New England market, sold as Native or Local grown berries. We need customers to be clear as to where their fruit is being grown. In July of 2017 one Canadian dollar was worth only 70 cents. I hope other growers can weigh in on this issue.

Editor's note: see 9 V.S.A. § 2465a... "local," "locally grown," and any substantially similar term shall mean that the goods being advertised originated within Vermont or 30 miles of the place where they are sold, measured directly, point to point, except that the term "local" may be used in conjunction with a specific geographic location, such as "local to New England," or a specific mile radius, such as "local-within 100 miles," as long as the specific geographic location or mile radius appears as prominently as the term "local," and the representation of origin is accurate.

(Plainfield NH) After un-jelling diesel fuel filters and getting machines functional once again, we spent the better part of a week processing firewood for the farm families that used so much wood keeping houses temperate in that nasty cold snap. A lot of propane was consumed as well. As the weather has abated, we are now pruning blueberries, renovating our portable-affordable 4 wheeled laying hen house, unpacking and storing seeds and taking cuttings in the ornamentals house. People are taking vacations and it is about as quiet as it will get here for the season. We are taking down some cooling units to be moved into a dedicated packing and storage barn, the construction of which was put on hold due to the miserably cold weather.

Pests of all types abound here at Edgewater Farm. Despite the cold temps we are at war with foxglove aphids, a spike in mealy bug populations in some of the ornamental stock plants and two-spotted spider mites. I have learned the hard way that you need a strong approach at this time of year with greenhouse pests or by March you are going to be behind the 8 ball if you are trying to do it biologically. Additionally, in the barns and greenhouse there is an outbreak of rodents from voles down to white footed deer mice. We have been trapping as many as possible in the farm stand, greenhouses and barns. We have been using the new generation (warfarin-less) mouse baits from Tom-Cat as well, and going through quite a lot of it. I am not convinced that we are killing them with this product, so much of it disappears that I wonder if they are eating it and we are sustaining the population rather than reducing it.

(Newburyport MA) Winter greens have grown very nicely, both in the greenhouses and the unheated tunnels. We are selling through them quickly. Wish I had started plugs to replant a few beds with. Tomato and celery transplants are growing rapidly for planting in the greenhouses in March. Killed six large pigs in December, but we will still sell out of sausages before the next pigs are ready for the butcher. Farmers Market sales have been VERY strong. CSA signups are running late this year. Very much looking forward to downsizing my acreage again this year. This will be my fifty-fifth year farming, and I, along with my crew, am happy about slowing down a bit more. Ready for some spring weather!

Argyle, NY (Pleasant Valley Farm) We have been amazed at the continued production of many greens out of our three high tunnels (34x144) considering all the nights below zero since mid-December. Regrowth is just starting to increase with the longer and warmer days. The lettuce took the biggest hit, but we have plants growing in the greenhouse to replace them and have seeded some in the tunnel directly. The Asian greens have been very prolific, and there are the first signs of some varieties starting to bolt, but new seedlings from early January will be ready to transplant in after them in a few weeks.

Our spinach has been one of the best crops in many winters, with over 15 varieties, all of which are doing well and we would repeat again. The diversity of the varieties has always been a good thing, with some growing better in the cold, some better with moisture variations, etc. No sign of any downy mildew but crown mites are here. Aza-Direct (neem) has always controlled them.

The soil moisture monitoring system (Watermark) has been a great tool for us to use for indicating when to irrigate, showing that we previously might have over-irrigated, especially in the spinach, which likes to be on the dry side. The parsley has not performed great with the cold, but both the curly and flat are still alive and rebounding well.

On some of the coldest nights (-15 to -18 F) we added a 4th layer of rowcover (P30) on half of one tunnel and had the Davis monitoring equip under the covers on both halves. It was interesting to show that the 4-layer area was about 1-2 degrees warmer than the 3 layers, something we would have expected. There is a lot that can be studied on temperatures in the tunnels for researchers.

Steaming the beds, done in the fall before planting, has continued to be a great benefit to us with almost no hand-weeding and all crops looking healthy and nice,

Some of the sweet potatoes that had row cover on them in the fall but were still in the ground with temps in the 30's show signs of cold damage (mostly the smallest ones have sunken spots). We are learning that they should be harvested before the soil temperature drops below 50 degrees (55 is safer, and they don't grow below that anyway). A new goal for us next year.

With fewer winter greens on the market (most farms have stopped production in our area) it is impossible to keep up with demand. The markets are staying very strong and we hope more growers will jump in next year as it is lucrative, with low labor.