



**Vermont Vegetable and Berry News –January 7, 2019**  
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## **REPORTS FROM THE FIELD**

(Burlington) This fall was a good reminder that no two seasons are the same. The prior two winters our unheated tunnel greens were way too early, overlapping with the end of our field greens, so we pushed our autumn seeding dates later into the fall. Bummer for us this year, as almost nothing is ready on our target schedule. I'm left realizing we are unlikely to ever be able to hit the timing perfectly where the outdoor greens quit just as the tunnel crops are ramping up. That said, we are seeing much lower rates of lettuce crown rot in the multi-cut leaf lettuces this year, likely due to the cooler temperatures during planting and establishment that aren't conducive to *Rhizoctonia* development. We're hosting a tunnel research trial in conjunction with UVM researchers testing ASD (Aerobic Soil Disinfestation - yikes!) as a Rhizoc control, which also may help this winter.

We are happily moving into our new winter storage and washing facility, and now are able to process produce all through the winter without waiting for the 'warm' day in the mid-20s and setting up all manner of plastic sheeting and construction heaters. Since we have additional storage capacity, we harvested many bulk bins of Brussels sprout stalks in mid-November prior to the deep freeze, and were pretty happy with the sprout quality through the third week of December, something we've not had the space to do in prior years.

(Westminster West) Well, December was a lost month as I came down with pneumonia at Thanksgiving. I do not recommend it! I hired a local carpenter to repair the damaged greenhouse wall and frame that was destroyed in summer's wind storms, worth the cost to get it done well and timely.

Dug soil samples from 3 greenhouses and ready to send those out soon. No storage crops left, donated the remainders of squash and onions to local food bank. Still have black garlic on hand and steady sales should clean them out in a few weeks. Very happy we covered the acre of fall planted garlic with 3 layers of heavy weight remay, snow cover was all gone and warm weather would have messed with the sleeping cloves, hopefully more snow is on the way soon.

Already dealing with re-staffing issues as some experienced folks have found more financial rewarding jobs this winter. Having raised our average wages to \$15/hour, I am hard pressed to go up again before the season even starts, but may be forced to do so in response to employment conditions here.

Our hemp trials were very successful and I'm planning on a much larger planting for CBD production as well as seedlings that many of you have already ordered. It's been emotionally and financially rewarding as so many customers have thanked us for helping them with their health problems, I never had this kind of feedback from people before, so it feels really nice and encouraging as we grow forward.

(Plainfield NH) We are in full winter mode with folks trying to cram in vacations and holidays. Greenhouse upgrades have been completed in not so favorable weather conditions. Mulch was distributed in the strawberry fields on top of the snow and on the rows- for the most part. There will definitely be some handwork in the spring. Still packing and shipping out roots crops. Seed orders are coming in and being broken down. Hard goods being marked for the up-coming greenhouse season. Some shop repairs being made, but it still looks pretty backed up in there. In the prop greenhouses we are seeding long-season ornamentals and perennials and taking vegetative cuttings of stock plants. There are order changes and tax work to be done. I thought this was supposed to be a slow time of year...

(Little Compton RI) Mild winter down in Southern NE. The deeper into the winter we go, the more we open up our greens house and cover the plants less every cold night. Especially the spinach. It hasn't seen a cover yet and seems fine. But we've see edema in one house for the last four years in a row! Believe it is exacerbated by crazy fertility after 25 years of tomatoes and greens. This fall planning on renting a bobcat and replacing the top 11" of soil. We did this with our first tomato house two years ago and seems to have paid off. Enjoyed the High Tunnel conference. Best nugget of an idea from the Canadian grower was his confirmation of putting misters above his cucumber crop to keep the mite population down. Apparently, they don't like a moist environment and their populations always seem to explode during mid-June and July. He sprays twice in the morning on sunny days so all the plants are dry before sundown.

(Argyle NY) The lack of sunshine has affected the growth of spinach and Swiss chard but not salad mix, kale or Asian Greens. We cut our first salad mix out of the tunnels earlier than ever (Thanksgiving) and we will be able to start cutting regrowth next week. We are trialing several new varieties and feel Cavendish is too small and slow growing, Clearwater is a pretty good replacement for Bolsachica, and Deronda is very good. Markets have been very strong for us, and we cannot meet the demand because we have no-one else growing ANY winter greens for our markets. Quite disappointing when it is so lucrative. We grew 8 varieties of sweet potatoes as a trial and they are being evaluated this month by us and extension, but so far our favorites for flavor are Covington, Burgundy and Bonita (white one).

We just saw some cabbage loopers and aphids in the tunnels this past week so sprayed BT and we will monitor the aphids but don't usually get ladybugs until mid-February (and actually have some live ones in the tunnels now!); we have some white mold on a few areas of lettuce (salad mix varieties), we are about to trial Contans to see effectiveness, and we've been fighting to keep row covers dry with the cloudy weather. We use this link for a lot of great info from extension: <http://vegetablemdonline.ppath.cornell.edu/NewsArticles/NewsList.htm>.

For the most part, all greens and herbs are doing well in the three tunnels, just need more sun. We are working on our year-end books, seed orders (anxious to try new Downy resistant basil), new construction projects with shed bays and a maintenance shop, and are heading to conferences soon. We look forward to seeing lots of folks at the VVBGA meeting Jan. 21-22 at Lake Morey.

## **VEGETABLE NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT WORKSHOPS**

This winter is the time to work on your farm's nutrient management plan (NMP)! Save the date for a day-long nutrient management workshop, where you can: Develop or complete a RAPS-compliant NMP; Learn to use VVBGA's on-line farmOS record keeping system; Hear from other farmers about their soil health strategies; Learn from a featured soil health speaker about how on-farm practices affect nutrient availability.

January 30 -- Poultney\*

Feb 11 -- Burlington\*

Feb 13 -- Springfield\*

Feb 21-- Randolph

Feb 26 -- Amherst, MA (part 1 of soil health series)

Feb 28 -- Brattleboro -- (part 2 of soil health series)

March 2 -- Craftsbury

\*These workshops are "cafe style" and can be attended for any portion of the day--perfect for anyone who has a partially completed plan or would like enhanced one-on-one TA, especially if you attended a workshop last year. For more information on these workshops or assistance with vegetable nutrient management, please contact Becky Maden or look for her at the VVBGA Annual Meeting trade show. [Rebecca.Maden@uvm.edu](mailto:Rebecca.Maden@uvm.edu)

## **TRANSFERRING THE FARM RESOURCES**

Mike Ghia, Land For Good

What is the future of your farm? If you are like most farmers, you are so busy with the day-to-day business of farming you find it difficult to take the time to plan ahead, particularly planning for a transition from one generation to the next. It can be especially challenging during times of financial uncertainty. The long-term concerns of farm succession and transfer may seem far away and not of immediate concern. And it can be difficult if there is not someone immediately lined up to take over the farm. At the same time, you probably have hopes for the future of your farm, and have thought some about what would like to happen to you, your family, your business and your land. To make those hopes more likely to become reality means taking some time to focus on planning for the inevitable transitions that come with life. With sound succession and transfer planning with concrete action steps, it is more likely that the goals and desires of all the generations involved can be met, and there is a greater likelihood that the farm will stay in farming.

One of the biggest obstacles to getting started with farm succession and transfer planning is that many farmers don't know where to start. This is particularly true when it's not clear who might take over the farm. The very first steps usually involve setting personal goals for what you ideally want to see become of the farm in the future. And part of this typically involves differentiating between goals for the business, goals for the farm itself (the real estate), and goals for yourself and your family. Even this can be challenging, but Vermont farmers are lucky to have a number of resources to help you to get started, to help main momentum, and navigate potholes. The includes the Transferring the Farm Workshop February 12th (below),

Land For Good's Farm Transfer Resources page

<http://landforgood.org/resources/toolbox/toolbox-farm-families/>

UVM Extension's Transfer the Farm Video Series

<http://www.uvm.edu/farmtransfer/?Page=videos.html>

and the Vermont Farm and Forest Viability Program which offers two years of services to farm families on succession, transfer, and business planning. <https://vhcb.org/viability>

## **TRANSFERRING THE FARM WORKSHOP**

Tuesday, February 12, from 9 am to 3:30 pm at the UVM Extension Classroom at 327 US Route 302, Berlin VT. This workshop will help farmers make informed decisions and take action steps towards transferring their farm to the next generation of their family or a non-family successor. Farmers will learn from professionals who can help in the process and other farmers who have been through a transfer. Topics include why succession planning is important, retirement and estate planning, addressing tax issues in a transfer, legal entities and tools you can use to transfer farm assets and determining your goals to address transfer planning and business transition. Sponsored by Land For Good, in partnership with Vermont Housing & Conservation Board, Dinse Law, Intervale Center, UVM Extension, and Yankee Farm Credit. Funded in part by the USDA Beginning Farm and Rancher Development Program. For more info and to register, go to [landforgood.org/rsvp](http://landforgood.org/rsvp) or call 603-357-1600.

## **2019 NOFA-VT WINTER CONFERENCE**

February 16-18, UVM Davis Center, Burlington, VT

This year's conference features workshops and panel discussions on tomato grafting, irrigation systems, cover cropping, business planning and marketing, hemp production, farm bill updates and much more. Monday's intensive options include no-till vegetables and branding and marketing. VVBGA members can register today at the NOFA member rate using access code NOFA-VVBGA at [www.nofavt.org/conference](http://www.nofavt.org/conference). Questions? [winterconference@nofavt.org](mailto:winterconference@nofavt.org) or call 802-434-4122.