



University of Vermont

Extension

College of Agriculture and Life Sciences

Vermont Vegetable and Berry News – October 1, 2026

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<https://www.uvm.edu/extension/horticulture/commercial>

REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

(Burlington) Fall is hopping with harvests. Most of our fresh pick and storage crops look good. Appreciating our great team this time of year, persevering as the weight and frequency of harvest increase after a busy spring and summer.

Finishing winter squash harvest this week, with sweet potatoes next week, completing our cold-tender outdoor crops. Butternut and Acorn quality are nice this year but Delicata is subpar, despite receiving the same fertility, water, etc. Excellent pumpkin crop; I'm impressed by the powdery mildew tolerance of (unsprayed) 'Voodoo' pie pumpkin and 'Duchess' jack-o-lantern.

Storage cabbage and Brussels sprouts are both looking good, though slightly slow to mature due to the cooler fall. Along with lower leaf removal and topping, dry weather has helped keep the sprouts cleaner, and cabbage aphids haven't been too bad yet, with approximately weekly sprays of Grandevo alternating with pyrethrum.

Tomato and pepper yields plummeted this month in our unheated tunnels. Despite the chillier weather, cucumbers kept going through the end of September, possibly due to a complete lack of downy mildew, which often ends the crop. Aside from harvest, tearing out and flipping a tunnel per week for winter crops occupies most of our time.

(Westminster) The season is starting to wind down. All our winter squash is harvested, and next big push will be the root crops: beets, carrots, rutabagas, turnips, and watermelon and daikon radishes. We're still harvesting bunched red beets. We have quite a bit of storage cabbage.

Demand is still good for all our crops. We could have planted more sweet corn; it's almost done and sales were strong this year.

We've been seeding cover crops, mostly winter rye but also some red clover. Next week we'll rent Cheshire County Conservation District's no-till drill, which does a great job seeding on rough ground and needs only one pass - we don't have to harrow in the seed. And we're in the midst of planting our greenhouses for the winter market, which opens after our farmstand closes in December.

(Orwell) It has felt like a quick shift to fall, with cool nights slowing down tunnel crops. September is a big transition time, with lots of last-minute decisions about what to tear out and what to continue harvesting. Each week of diminishing light is a precious window to plant winter greens--in other words, time that we can never get back.

We are thinking critically about the value of existing crops vs. the cost of establishing new ones. For instance, if I walk through a tunnel of tomatoes and estimate that 2 lbs. of nice fruit per plant will ripen in the next 2 weeks, that's about \$4000 of crop we can easily pick and sell. If we rip out the tomatoes now to establish greens, we spend money to flip and plant the house, plus the cost of seed or transplants, and then we have \$5000 to \$8000 of greens to harvest over the course of the winter--which means harvesting, washing, packing and driving greens to market. Is that extra work worth it? We are trying not to make farming any more complicated than it needs to be. So, we move along at a steady pace, planting what we can but not rushing through crops that aren't ready to call it quits. This also helps us plant a few tunnels into cover crops over the winter to help build the soil.

We've been happy with our automated roll up sides on several tunnels. We installed both Bartlett and Advancing Alternatives systems and have no complaints about either. Watching the roll ups move up and down all season has helped me understand how differently automation manages the tunnels than humans do. Most striking is the realization that I have probably been running tunnels too cool for years by opening early and closing late. The most important aspect to this technology is that it allows us to leave the farm and not fret about the sides being open or closed. It also saves labor on a daily basis.

Thanks to a Vermont Agency of Agriculture Specialty Crop Block Grant, we're collecting data on performance of tunnel tomatoes with and without automated roll up sides and/or HAF fans to see if there is an impact on yield and quality.

(Underhill) We've got about half a pumpkin and squash crop, lost most of our gourds and specialty pumpkins this year. Cucumber beetle and squash bug pressure was intense this season, took the plants down early, drought kicked them while they were down. Some squash that we harvested melted after harvesting; a red mold was seen, but not I did not identify it. We took this opportunity to clean up the fields and will have them seeded to winter rye in next few days, which pumpkin ground doesn't usually get.

Haven't had a frost yet, but the flower patch is petered out, and we'll be pulling the high tunnel tomatoes real soon. Sweet corn had a slow start after feeding all the wildlife but ended strong and turned out to be an average season. Still dry here, and our strawberries would appreciate some rain and a warm October!

(Elmore) Best harvests ever; most perfect fruit, least insects. Least fungal challenges too. Never seen crops this good and plentiful in 46 years of growing on this cold hillside. Tree after tree loaded with the bounty of the season. Everything came in two weeks early all throughout the year, but the inner fruit seeds were always brown, which signals totally ripe and ready, though early. Berry harvests were smaller than tree crops. It was so dry all summer up here. Good thing the trees have deep roots, and can gather the dew.

(Plainfield NH) Ample moisture and moderate temps have delayed the fall color change, and so far we are frost-free. Hard to find a farmer in these parts that has a bad word about this growing season. Warm evenings keep harvests going for things like tomatoes and raspberries, but it is also the season of foliar fungi, so we try to keep crops disease free with fungicides. Oxidate goes in every tank mix. Hard squash and pumpkins stayed PM free for a long time; it usually turns up here in August. As always, there is not enough help at this time of the season. Fortunately, the mornings are relatively temperate, so harvest conditions are not brutal. I have yet to see the crew break out neoprene gloves to harvest.

A beautiful crop of garlic is on the greenhouses benches; topping and cleaning will give us old guys job security well into the future.

Fall cover crops get put in as soon as land opens up. The per acre seed rate will increase as we go deeper into the fall and seedings won't garner as much growth with the shortening days and cooler temps. Seeded down a half acre of pollinator-wildflower crops 10 days ago, pressed it in with a Brillion. It was a mixture of perennial and biennial flowers from Albert Lea Seed and I cut in some Dutch white clover because it's a low grower.

UPDATES FROM THE UVM PLANT DIAGNOSTIC CLINIC

Dr. Giovanna Sassi

September brought a mix of leaf diseases, fruit rots, and wilts to the Clinic. Here are a few of this month's findings and some quick clues to help distinguish them in the field.

Solanaceous Crops. Late blight was detected on a home-garden tomato in Franklin County. **We have not detected late blight in samples from Vermont commercial farms this season.** Late blight can move quickly. Watch for rapidly expanding, water-soaked or greasy-looking brown lesions. During humid weather, white sporulation may appear along lesion margins on leaf undersides. In comparison, early blight (*Alternaria*) generally produces drier brown spots with distinctive concentric "target-like" rings.

In Chittenden County, early blight was diagnosed on tomato, Asian eggplant, and potato and confirmed microscopically by characteristic *Alternaria* conidia. Tomato samples also included Fusarium wilt and Fusarium crown and root rot. Symptoms are progressive yellowing and wilt, brown vascular tissue inside the lower stem, or brown decay at the crown and roots.

Berry Crops. Strawberry from Addison County showed common leaf spot and anthracnose. Common leaf spot produces small purple-red spots with pale centers, while anthracnose is more likely to cause dark, sunken lesions on fruit, runners, petioles, or crowns.

Blueberry from Rutland County included mummy berry and *Botryosphaeria* stem canker and dieback. Look for shriveled, mummified berries and blighted shoots with mummy berry, compared with stem cankers and dying canes with *Botryosphaeria*. For perennial berries, now is a good time to mark problem areas while symptoms are still visible and plan sanitation and dormant-season pruning.

Cucurbits. Samples from Grand Isle County included *Alternaria* leaf blight, sour rot associated with *Geotrichum spp.*, and gummy stem blight/black rot. *Alternaria* produces brown leaf spots that may develop concentric rings. Sour rot causes soft, watery fruit breakdown, often with a sour odor. Gummy stem blight can produce brown leaf and stem lesions, sometimes with gummy exudate.

We received an inquiry about cucurbit yellow vine disease (CYVD). Watch for rapid yellowing and wilting of vines followed by collapse, with yellow-brown discoloration inside the crown or lower stem. If you suspect CYVD, send symptomatic crown and lower stem tissue to the Clinic.

Tree Fruit. Plum showed brown rot while apple samples included apple scab, rust, and bitter rot. A pear sample arrived too necrotic for diagnosis. This is a good reminder to submit samples while symptoms are still developing.

End-of-Season Reminder. Before symptoms disappear with harvest, frost, or leaf drop, make note of disease hotspots in your fields and plantings. Remove heavily diseased or rotting plant material where appropriate, avoid leaving cull fruit in production areas, and use this season's disease history to help plan rotations, sanitation, pruning, and management for 2027.

Sending Us a Sample? For the best chance of a diagnosis, send both healthy and diseased tissue, especially the margin where the two meet. Avoid sending only completely dead tissue. For wilted plants, include the crown and roots. Photos of the whole plant and growing area are helpful. Complete and submit Specimen Form with your sample, available at <https://www.uvm.edu/extension/plant-diagnostic-clinic>

FARM-MADE SEED NEEDED FOR UVM RESEARCH

Do you save your own bean, hemp, pepper, wheat, or arugula seed? The UVM Plant Diagnostic Clinic needs samples of both diseased and clean seed for a study of Cold Plasma as a seed sanitation treatment. We want to determine whether it can reduce seedborne pathogens while maintaining germination, emergence, and seed quality. A couple of hundred seeds per sample is ideal. There is no cost to participate, and you will receive a summary of diagnostic findings from the seed lots. Email Dr. Giovanna Sassi at gsassi@uvm.edu for more information.

FARMERS SOUGHT FOR PROJECT PARTICIPATION AND PLANNING

The [Prosper Valley Farmer Collective](#) seeks farmers to participate in a funded project and to provide input on three grant proposals. Please complete any or all surveys relevant to you. Questions? Todd Erceg at terceg62@gmail.com

Soil Health & Community Seed System. Our Northeast SARE-funded project is recruiting farmers for soil health testing and development of a community seed system. Participating farmers are paid. Survey <https://forms.gle/zQ7xycJCbPusYTvM8>

Farm Energy & Resilience. Help us understand farm energy needs, outages, renewable energy, and interest in long-duration energy storage. <https://forms.gle/ctwPVw3YZ4M7jkEw6>

Farmers Learning From Farmers. Help shape a farmer-driven forum for sharing challenges, ideas, knowledge, resources, and solutions.

<https://forms.gle/KFTX756M5w328Gae8>

High Pressure Processing & food innovation. Help us assess interest in regional high-pressure processing (HPP), food processing, product development, aggregation, and related infrastructure.

<https://forms.gle/Zmiui7zbao0EjZqZ8>

UPCOMING EVENTS

October 17 at 5:30 pm. Vermont State University, Randolph Center. Dirt and Democracy -a Land Use panel featuring Roger Allbee, former Vermont Secretary of Agriculture, Greg Burt, farmer and House Agriculture Committee, Amanda Janoo, economist and gubernatorial candidate, Neil Ryan, farmer from Corinth, Michael Fernandez, Bennington farmer and Conservation District. This event is free; dinner and drinks available to purchase. This is not a campaign event. Learn more and register at <https://www.whiterivernrcd.org/2026-10-17-dirt-democracy-land-use-panel>

October 19 and 20 at 6 pm. The State of Farming, a documentary that tells the story of Vermont agriculture through the voices of the farmers. Welden Theatre, St. Albans. Tickets at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/the-state-of-farming-film-screening-tickets-2000485111821>

December 15-17. New England Fruit and Vegetable Conference and Trade Show. Manchester NH. Info at <https://newenglandvfc.org/>

January 19. VVBGA Annual Meeting, Lake Morey Resort, Fairlee VT. Details in December.