



Vermont Vegetable and Berry News – October 11, 2011

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

REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

(Montpelier) Busy this fall and trying to stay focused. Repairing and re-skinning 2 houses with a 3rd new one laying on the ground; hope it is up and running by the end of this month. Harvest my first peaches this year; tasted good! Winter greens in the ground. Seedling shed is loaded with transplants for the new house. Whole flock of chickens is heading over to a neighboring farm. I am getting out of the egg business; have better ways to expend my time and effort. Finding aphids on my Senposai leaves which have been under remay. Chasing a coyote that has gotten a bit too brave for his own good and got the final woodchuck last week. My acreage is small and just a few rodents cause quite a bit of damage. Kill trap is the best method in my opinion as long as you can find the burrow. Market sales steady through the season while wholesale accounts (local ones) have really tapered off; the economy? New CSA went well and winter shares are selling well. Great feedback and people are signing up for next summer already. Canning tomatoes will never be grown again; late blight finally got me for the last time. Planning on moving them into a new high tunnel next year. I am glad to see frost come.

(Plainfield NH) Our farmstand closed Oct. 10 and we limped to the finish with frost the previous Wednesday. The crew's been consumed by fall harvest and packing crops for wholesale. Still picking a few raspberries, corn, scrounging GH tomatoes, etc. but mostly it's over. Although a good harvest of fall squash they have not held up well so considering an Oxidate dip next year and packing more carefully. Finally finished pruning summer bearing raspberries and getting most of the cover crops down; some late rye yet to go. Ready ground to plant blueberries in November; garlic in the next two weeks. Have been pushing the envelope and foliar feeding the strawberries, half of which look good (trying to not get my hopes up) and other patches look like hell (trying not to be depressed) that suffer from root diseases and infestations of Asian garden beetle. Will cover the fall plasticulture plants this week after this bit of Indian summer ends. Now shift gears to cleaning ornamental stock plants in the greenhouses and pushing them for a few vegetative cuttings before the New England Veg and Fruit conference. Greenhouses will be cleaned, new skins go on, and new groundcloth in others. We have drained pumps, but will do majority of machine servicing next month prior to mulching strawberries.

(Burlington) We are out of business, for the season at least, due to flooding from Irene. I am working on my resume and looking for work to help get through the winter. We have received a VEDA loan and a grant from NOFA. Waiting to hear from the other grant and loan funds. Tired of people saying things like this happen for a reason and we will be stronger for it. Trying to remain optimistic but feeling very discouraged especially about the FDA's unscientific involvement. I think Vermont would be better if we could make informed decisions on the local level based on science and intuition. I am grateful for all the support from the community.

I think the local food movement needs to focus on the cleaning up the watershed systems in our state so we have a chance at achieving a level of food security in our state. Best of luck to all the farmers out there who have suffered from the floods, and I hope that those of you who slipped through unscathed have a strong finish to the season.

(Warren) Not much left to harvest, half acre of roots and some cabbage, a little spinach too. I plan to sow high tunnels to spinach on Oct 29th for an early crop next spring. I'm happy to have been able to sow lots of cover crops this fall since we plowed under most of the roots after the flood. Soil test indicated half a percent higher organic matter than fields had last fall where there was an overwintered cover crop. The ones with no cover remained the same. We are securing more land on higher ground to grow long season crops like potatoes, winter squash and cabbage. I'm concerned about the logistics of moving equipment around but it's something we have to do not only to protect against losses from future floods but also to take more land out of production and into soil improving crops. We need more than just bagged fertilizer on our sandy fields and compost is way too expensive to buy and too time consuming to make in the kind of quantities that we are making this fall. Wholesale markets are steady despite everything and I get the sense that folks are trying to do as much as they can to support us. I love just pulling bags out of the walk-in and loading them on the truck verses running around for 10 bunches of this and 20 pounds of that like we do all summer long.

(Monkton) Great crops of fall raspberries and sweet potatoes are welcome gifts during this difficult year. Although we were spared the worst of the flooding our clay soil has been soggy since May with a brief transformation into cement during July. We're grateful for a string of sunny days to finish our second cut and plant garlic. There's a huge demand for high quality seed garlic this year which I hope other growers are tapping into since we've been sold out since August. Sales at all three of the farmers markets we attend are down. Are there too many markets? Did localvores get bored?

(Enfield NH) Irrigated through the frost so still have good pepper and eggplant, both with high yields and great quality. Tomatoes pretty much done, did not spray copper soon enough and Septoria and other diseases took over. Root crops coming in, but not growing very fast. Celeriac did well though. Last planting of beets and carrots are slow now. Potato yield was bad, problems with planting too close to the surface, and weeds. OK winter squash harvest, have a lot of rot in one field, particularly buttercup, red kuri. Still have lettuce, but spotty. Fall cabbages are nice. Onion and shallot sales good. One greenhouse planted to greens; getting late but will plant a second greenhouse this week. Cover crops mostly down; trying triticale and a pea that is supposed to overwinter.

(Plainfield) Cold nights chilly enough to blacken basil in an unheated single layer hoop houses. End of a great fall raspberry crop. Cherry tomatoes were not frosted, but fruit quality declines so much with low temperatures that it is time to tear them out and plant spinach for over the winter. Napa cabbage heading nicely. Hoping for continued growing weather to finish crops of green cabbage, daikon, and rutabagas. Hollow heart issues in russet potatoes. Mosquitoes still with us. Kale sales very strong.

(Royalton) First frost, but only just so; the galinsoga died off at the top, but is still going strong in the ground. Planted all of the garlic: three varieties that I've saved from seed for over 18 years. Lettuce, arugula, beets, radishes, bunching onions doing great. Going to rip out the raspberries, this is the third year that they haven't set fruit! Horseradish ready to harvest, late potatoes are scab-free and blight-free.

(Middlebury) Just tore the tomatoes out of the high tunnel; left them in 3 weeks longer than planned; they were looking pretty worked. We lost a bunch of our crops to flooding, so the greenhouses have been carrying our CSA (we have stopped going to market until CSA ends in 2 weeks; there is not enough for both). We have been able to squeak by and provide an adequate share. I'm glad to have the tomatoes out and to start seeding spinach for the winter. The high tunnel eggplants are still going strong, despite a tortoise beetle population, so I will leave them in as long as possible.

(Little Compton RI) We are starting a deep winter CSA, after doing farmers markets through the winter the last two years the time is right. But what a year to make that commitment! Lost acres of squash to Phytophthora and hurricane funk. The winter CSA makes this time of year even more hectic than May because the deadlines for planting/transplanting are more punishing if you miss one. Five days late in planting spinach translates into weeks difference come January. Late fall crops are coming in OK; some rot in Broccoli. We put boron on cole crop plantings and results are mixed so far, but we were cautious since too much boron is worse than too little; it's a long term adjustment so we will add more next year till the soil tests say we are OK. Took the covering off oldest greenhouse this August, then had eleven inches of rain plus a hurricane. Hope that will leach the excess sodium out of the beds.

(Westminster West) Finally had 2 killing frosts but crops in tunnels are fine. Have return visit of tomato horn worms which never happened here so late before. Still picking raspberries in the tunnels and late planted blackberries are starting to ripen! Great crop of fall carrots and beets and turnips; the wet fall weather has pushed them along. Winter squash and onions all graded and in the barn; look nice and sales are steady with good wholesale prices. Farmers market sales also steady and strong. Best mum and aster crop ever and should be sold out next week. Huge crop of potted herbs for sale thru the winter and spring are filling our big greenhouse. Running some experimental benches using grow bags for crop production this fall and winter, look real nice. Late planted cover crops are coming up strong in the warm weather. Thanks to everyone that helped us celebrate NOFA's 40th anniversary as well as our 40th year of farming!

(Wolcott) We're in the throes of squash seed harvest and the crew appreciates the warm weather. Hope they get the extracting done before the next rains. There's a lot of clean-up left outside, and a lot of seed to clean in the seed mill. Yields for the season are over the place: some up, some down. We had success with test production of growing covered seed crops that we can't grow outside here, such as chard and onions. We've also got a small beet crop in the ground for harvest next year. If we can produce these small specialty varieties here it would justify putting up more unheated houses. Now if we could only find an organic method to control grasshoppers that love the tunnels.

(Jericho) Thankful weather that gives fall greens a boost. Experimenting with different greens and our favorite this week is pea shoots: very sweet. Planning on putting low tunnels over some beds but waiting for warm weather to end. Harvesting massive fennel that we started in a hoop house after early cucumbers removed. Putting in better drainage around a few high tunnels that were swamped this past Spring in hopes of avoiding a repeat; lost a lot of potential crop from waterlogged soils inside the tunnels because water table was so high. Constructing another 140' tunnel to hold laying hens so we can rotate them to different tunnels each winter and have better nutrient management and planting schedules for vegetables. Hard frost took out the escaped galinsoga and a few of the other crops we were sick of harvesting. Enjoying the shortening day length because it means we get more sleep.

(Westfield) Finishing digging roots crop, much easier with this dry and warm weather; soon as the soil is dry enough prepare for planting garlic. Finally a hard frost to take care of the weeds and put all our attention to the greenhouses. Spinach, kale, Swiss chard and mache are looking great. I feel like a pro with my greenhouse tomatoes this year: huge crop and no disease. It was a good season at our farm stand and we were lucky we avoided the spring and fall flooding.

(Argyle, NY) Finally dried enough to start harvesting winter storage crops. Sweet potatoes (Covington) are best we've ever had; nice size, uniform, and high yield and the an undercutter bar from Roeters Equip is doing a perfect job of lifting the crop which was planted with double rows on biotello and hay/straw mulch in-between. Other fall storage crops look OK but some rot in carrots; potato quality is unknown but we're digging this week before more rain. Diseases and challenges with lettuce, winter squash, cabbages, beets, corn (northern corn leaf blight), and spinach have been frustrating, but both the high tunnels are mostly planted and we look forward to nice crops for winter. Markets are still very strong with much product (thanks to diversity) to be grateful for.

FARM TOUR AT PLEASANT VALLEY FARM SATURDAY OCT. 15

On Oct. 15th Paul and Sandy Arnold will host a farm tour/open house at their farm located at 118 South Valley Road in Argyle, NY one hour from Rutland VT. The tour is 3:30 to 4:30; then walk around till 5:30. They have 6 acres of intensive vegetables, 1 acre of fruits, 4 acres cover crops grown with organic methods on the 60 acre farm. They sell year-round at farmers' markets. Fields are filled with many fall/winter crops; annual bed strawberries and garlic were recently planted. Other items to see: 2 large high tunnels with automatic venting (recently planted with winter greens), radiant-heated polycarbonate greenhouse with rolling benches, 10kW solar, domestic evacuated tube hot water solar system, washing station nearing GAP approval, 24 ton capacity root cellar, winter storage facilities, post-harvest systems, a masonry wood heat system, and more! Children welcome, handicapped folks can be accommodated, but no dogs please. More info: arnold.pvf@gmail.com or 518-638-6501.

TWILIGHT MEETING ROCKVILLE MARKET FARM MONDAY OCT. 17

“Using Chickens to Grow Winter Squash and Ending Up with Pigs” is the title of this meeting on Oct. 17 from 4:30-7:00 pm hosted by Eric and Keenann Rozendaal at Rockville Market Farm, 205 Cemetery Rd, Starksboro VT. They use chickens to build fertility in the soil before growing butternut squash. They peel the butternut at the farm and use the seeds to finish pigs. Tour their facilities and learn about their innovative production techniques. BYOB and BBQ to follow (food provided). The Rockville Market Farm includes 25 acres of vegetables, 2000 laying hens, 2000 meat birds, 50 pigs, and 6 greenhouses. The event is free for VOF farmers and full VV&BGA members, \$10 for NOFA-VT members, \$20 non-members. Contact: NOFA-VT at info@nofavt.org or 802- 434-4122.

FLOOD RECOVERY WORKSHOP FOR VEGETABLE FARMS WEDNESDAY NOV. 30

This event will take place Nov. 30 from 9-2 at the Berlin office of UVM Extension. The focus will be on practical information for growers on: post-flood production, financial planning, tax implications, insurance coverage and site evaluation. There will be a discussion of research needs, and time for individual consultations. There is no charge but please pre-register with Vern. Agenda is at: <http://www.uvm.edu/vtvegandberry/meetings/RecoveringFromTheFloodWorkshop.pdf>

REGISTER FOR NEW ENGLAND VEGETABLE AND FRUIT CONFERENCE DEC. 13-15

There will be more presentations than ever at this year's conference. The printed programs will soon be mailed to all Vermont growers. You can mail in the registration form that comes in the program or you can register on line at: http://www.newenglandvfc.org/about_the_conference.html. Reserve hotel rooms soon as nearby accommodations sell out fast. If you did not get a program and want to be on the mailing list, or if you got one but the address is incorrect please let Vern know. Kindly bring your program to the conference because supplies are limited.