



Vermont Vegetable and Berry News –October 2, 2018
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REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

(Charlotte) Pumpkins are going strong this year. We are getting ready for next year, and the canes from this year's crop are gone from the summer raspberries and now starting on the black raspberries. The fall raspberries are still producing, and we had a mild case of SWD this year, but we were able to pick them regularly.

(Dummerston) In my last field report I mentioned that cabbage aphids had been spreading amongst the brassicas and a lot of lady bugs had shown up as well. I had decided not to apply anything that might kill ladybugs which left me with only safer soap. At the time it seemed that the cabbage aphids were spreading rapidly in spite of the ladybugs and soap. But more recently the cabbage aphids have all but disappeared except for a few in the older plantings of kale. I don't know if this is due to the lady bugs or a change in the weather (we have not had a frost but have had some heavy rains) or maybe the soap in rain water washed the aphids away. An interesting and positive turn of events.

(S. Royalton) Great vines on my sweet potatoes, but I have low tuber set and many with cracks. I have been growing sweet potatoes for 23 years and this is my worst harvest ever, apparently from uneven water. Asparagus has purple spot and is dying fast. Again a new thing for me, hoping it doesn't come back in the future. So as not leave with all doom and gloom, a great year with tomatoes and melons.

(S. Burlington) Last week was the final top growth harvest on this organic herb farm. Cooling down and transitioning to herbal root harvest. Ashwagandha and Echinacea harvest was last week. Echinacea was a pretty good size and quality, but the ashwagandha had a rough season with the bone dry and high-heat weather. That stunted the growth throughout the whole season even with watering every other day. No mid-season cover crops germinated in the heat and dryness. I'm putting beds to bed with extra mulch and compost. Enjoying this last week of rain with gratitude. Final few weeks of root harvest now, with probably an early end to the season.

(Plainfield NH) Still harvesting nice raspberries, cukes and tomatoes. This year we kept them sprayed and it seems to have paid benefits. Labor shortage hampers fall harvest for us, and sends us into the fields after darkness. Though everyone is pretty beat, spirits still remain high, led by our professional and positive older Jamaican crew members. The lack of drama on the crew makes everything else possible to deal with.

Most winter squash and pumpkin is out of the field, and we are harvesting carrots as needed for sales. Potato digging has a long way to go. Good crop of beet and turnip can sit there for a while till we get to them. Struggling to get anything done like straightening out the messes in the blueberries and summer raspberries. Fall sales retail and wholesale have remained strong. Our stand will shut down Columbus day per usual, freeing up a few hands to help the field crew.

A mock FSMA inspection coming up with State and FDA personnel has got us a little nervous. I have heard rumors that written policies are something they are looking for, and currently we are weak in that area.

(Little Compton RI) Our drought-stricken corner of New England finally got some broccoli and cauliflower-saving rain. Five acres had been kept limping along with Kifco water guns but clearly wasn't going to make the finish line without a good soaking. We've had big losses from drought as well as deer. Finally spent the money at Wellscroft on three-dimensional deer fence and so far excellent results. "The" most important job is baiting the fence from the first day the deer see it: 6000 volts on their tongue creates a deep memory.

Our trusted Jang five row seeder has had some issues for the last few months; with the drive wheel system getting stuck on certain rotations which created maddening skips in the rows! After greasing everything we could think of, it came down to worn out bushings either side of the seed container drive sprocket. These can be bought from Mechanical Transplanter Co. but this winter we are going to rebuild the front drive gang with a few drive spike wheels to make sure we get solid traction and no more skips.

Farmers' market sales good. Harvesting sweet potatoes earlier this year. We have waited till mid-October in past but feel that led to injury from too-cold ground: never got them to last past Xmas!

(New London NH) It is certainly starting to feel like fall on the farm. All of the potatoes are harvested and stored, sweet potatoes are curing nicely, fall vines are all harvested, and the farm stand is surrounded by displays of pumpkins, gourds, corn stalks, and fall plants. Still no sign of any frost so we continue to harvest things like tomatoes, sweet corn, cucumbers, zucchini, beans, and peppers along with fall raspberries and strawberries. Fall broccoli and cauliflower has not been great this year due to high temps in August. Our last planting looks much better than the previous plantings so we are hopeful that the heads size up nicely over the next week.

We've begun to focus on projects such as rolling up cold frames for the winter, changing plastic on greenhouses, building a new high tunnel, pruning of summer raspberries, weeding strawberries, cleaning out tomato greenhouses, and seeding/transplanting winter crops in tunnels. Ground is all prepped for garlic planting which will start in a few weeks. We are going to try growing garlic on black plastic this year instead of bare soil as we have in the past. Hoping to reduce weed pressure and warm the soil faster in the spring.

(Argyle NY) The cooler temps have set in, but no frost in sight all the way to mid-October. Life is easier this way though we depend on row covers to keep falling tree leaves out of the lettuce. We'll still take the warmer days. Transitioning all 3 tunnels to winter production has taken up a lot of our time, along with harvesting winter squash, etc. The tunnels are about done with the last of the bed-steaming done today. We did that last year and all but eliminated weeding in the tunnels. Sweet potatoes are next to harvest, later than usual, but the temps have allowed us to delay.

We are working with Meg McGrath at Cornell on Long Island to trial 20 varieties of spinach to test resistance to 17 different downy mildew strains. (Editors note: contact Dr. McGrath if you want to conduct a trial on your farm, she still has some seed available: mtm3@cornell.edu.) We also worked with Cornell by putting down beneficial nematodes to combat wireworms this year. Will let you know in next report if successful. Cabbage, kohlrabis, rutabagas, and potatoes all look good for winter sales. Tomatoes and beans are still going strong but farmers' market customers are still looking for cukes and summer squash! Looking for more help if anyone knows of someone! (arnold.pvf@gmail.com)

CROPPING SYSTEMS FOR SOIL HEALTH

Wednesday, October 10, 2018 from 4-6pm
Elmer Farm: 855 Rte 116, Middlebury, VT

Join Spencer and Jennifer Blackwell along with the Champlain Valley Farmer Coalition and UVM Extension for a tour of Elmer Farm. Spencer and Jennifer Blackwell will describe the cropping systems they use to improve soil health, optimize crop yields, and minimize pest/weeds on their organic farm in Middlebury. Come see and discuss reduced tillage on vegetable crops, homegrown mulches, seasonal cover crops, crop rotation with perennials, irrigation, economical and labor saving equipment and more! This will be a great opportunity to see how conservation can be accomplished on a variety of scales, using innovative and low cost techniques, while being economically successful. Free. Sponsored by UVM and the Champlain Valley Farmer Coalition. For more info call (802) 388-4969 or email champlain.crops@uvm.edu

WINTER HIGH TUNNEL PRODUCTION

Thursday, October 18, 2018 from 3:30- 5:30 p.m.
Evening Song Farm, 576 Shunpike Road in Shrewsbury, VT

Join Ryan and Kara Fitzbeauchamp of Evening Song Farm, Rico Balzano from Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Becky Maden from UVM Extension for a tour and discussion about high tunnel management. Topics include: Strategies for efficient transition from tomatoes to greens; Tips for winter-long greens production; Soil and nutrient management in high tunnels; High tunnel funding opportunities from NRCS, and information about the new Required Agricultural Practices (RAPs) as they relate to vegetable growers. Free.

Education credits will be available. Pre-register by October 15 by calling Nanci McGuire at the 802-775-8034 ext. 117 or email nanci.mcguire@vt.nacdn.net

PRODUCE SAFETY ALLIANCE GROWER TRAINING COURSES

October 24-25, 2018 at the Bakery Annex in Rutland, VT. Cost: \$20

Registration Link: <https://bit.ly/2LlvBSJ>

November 8, 2018 at the Upper Valley Food Cooperative in White River Junction, VT

Cost: \$22. Registration Link: <http://bit.ly/PSA-Training>

These trainings satisfy the FSMA Produce Safety Rule requirement for covered farms that "at least one supervisor or responsible party" completes "food safety training ... recognized as adequate" by FDA (21 C.F.R. §112.22(c)). Registration fees include coffee, tea, and other beverages, lunch, and snacks; PSA Grower Training Manual (\$60 value); and Certificate of Course Attendance from AFDO (\$35 value) for participants who attend the entire training.

The trainings cover: Introduction to Produce Safety; Worker Health, Hygiene, and Training; Soil Amendments; Wildlife, Domesticated Animals, and Land Use; Agricultural Water; Postharvest Handling and Sanitation; and How to Develop a Farm Food Safety Plan. There will be time for questions and discussion. Questions? Dominique Giroux, Vermont Agency of Agriculture, dominique.giroux@vermont.gov or (802) 522-3132.