



Vermont Vegetable and Berry News – October 2, 2024
Compiled by Vern Grubinger, University of Vermont Extension
(802) 656-7534, vernon.grubinger@uvm.edu
<https://www.uvm.edu/extension/horticulture/commercial>

REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

(Burlington) The dry, warm autumn has been a boon to catching up after our flood replanting. Really hoping that our cabbages make it (thank you Harlow Farm, Walker Farm and High Meadows Farms for the seedlings) to a decent size by the time the growing season is truly over. Otherwise, our post-flood direct seeded root crops and other brassicas and greens look good. Cabbage aphids are making an appearance; I hope we can keep a lid on them with Grandevo and some other organic insecticides, which have worked well in recent years.

Full turnover in our tunnels, moving from summer to winter crops. Had the best indoor cucumber crop ever, picking from the beginning of June to end of September. Of all the cuke varieties we trial, we still love 'Katrina' for productivity and quality.

Winter CSA sales are brisk, despite summer flooding eliminating several key vegetables like Brussels sprouts. Hoping to fill out our roster without incident and meet out next spring CSA signup targets despite two years of flood losses. Most of our CSA members have been happy with what we have been able to put out on the tables despite our losses and are standing with the farm. We are fortunate to have such a dedicated clientele!

(Orwell) With the warm and sunny September, summer tunnel crops continue to produce well, and sales are good, which makes it hard to justify ripping them out and planting greens. The paper pot transplanter has been a game changer for easing the stress of tunnel flips—we are counting on speedy transplant establishment and growth!

One observation is that in a tunnel covered with 30% black shade cloth for July and most of August, we have very vegetative and healthy-looking tomato plants, but very little fruit. Seems like we should have removed the shade cloth sooner to optimize late summer light. Wondering if other growers have thoughts on this topic?

(Westminster) After a stormy late summer, we've had a nice fall. We're finishing up a squash harvest that's as good as we've had for some time. Picking squash in dry weather without mud or diseased plants should help the crop hold up well in storage this winter.

We're still trying to catch up with the carrot market. The carrots have had almost no disease and look terrific, but demand is so high we're having trouble keeping up market supply – not a problem to complain about!

We're halfway done harvesting a great parsnip crop. One issue we face is not enough bins to store all the root crops. We purchased 650 plastic bins over the last few years, and they maintain storage quality much better than wooden bins. We've also found it's important to lay a sheet of plastic over each bin.

A couple more weeks of picking sweet corn before that crop is through, and then we'll be looking forward to hunting camp, when, with luck, everything will be harvested and in the barn.

(Ange-Gardien, Quebec) Good summer so far! Lots of rain, lots of heat (especially nights) and a wonderful dry 2 weeks without rain for harvest. Most crops were in advance on the schedule which is good for cashflow. Lots of veggies on the market, lots of competition and prices are low in Montréal.

We have a client that went bankrupt in May. He owe us a lot of \$ which make a big hole in our cashflow. We struggle all summer to pay our loans, employees, etc. It was very stressful to manage. We had to go over the farm and go lean on many expenses. Lots of work but I guess the farm will be more profitable in the future years. Make sure you are aware of the financial situation of your clients and make sure you call them if the payment does not come in after a month!

For the first time we had a fourth generation of leek moth, and we are starting to see spotted cucumber beetles.

(Plainfield NH) After six weeks of no precipitation, we finally got almost 2" in a gentle storm last week. This drought would have been devastating had it occurred mid-summer with long days and increased heat. Valley fog, dew and shorter, cooler days allowed the vegetables to limp along (with more than a little drip and overhead watering).

Keeping up with SWD and fruit rot sprays in the outdoor plums and cherry tomatoes, but the season has been remarkably disease and pest free. Full scale harvest is underway; we are where we should be this time of year, with garlic, hard squash, onions and pumpkins, beets, turnip and about 40 % of the carrots in the cooler. Next week we will lift and grade potatoes. Cover crops up to date; much of the drip tape is pulled.

We wrapped up our best melon season ever, with over-the-top flavor quality and yield. Likewise, the sweet corn has been stellar. I would like to attribute this success to our secret techniques, but the truth is we have no idea makes this year different. I heard from other growers that flavor quality is up on vegetables overall, so it has to be weather related. Stellar weather to work in, and the scenery is making this job seem like a good career choice.

(Little Compton RI) Fall crops are 90% in and curing in greenhouses. Good timely rains this summer helped boost production. Deer pressure was surprisingly absent this season and we attribute it to ample green fodder all over town. However, a 7-acre field with eight-foot-high deer fence was severely challenged as they really prefer lettuce.

So far, fall raspberries are coming in without any signs of SWD. Second year planting and we're maintaining an organic orientation but will switch if SWD becomes a problem; half an acre is a lot to lose. Allium Leaf Miner is also a no-show this spring and fall, but 60 miles west of us a farm had ALM destroy their garlic crop in the spring.

USDA /NRCS in RI is testing a pilot program to take in/destroy pre-2004 diesel tractors with engines that do not meet Tier 4 standards, and do not have Deisel Exhaust Fluid or ReGen capabilities. The program roughly goes like this: they pay \$513 per braking horsepower toward a new in-kind tractor or skid steer replacement. The old machine can't be stripped or parted out; it must go to the metal recycling site and be crushed.

Farm injury warning: Many of us have rotted tires lingering on old harrows etc. A local farmer had just such a tire which one of his employees way over-filled. When he tried to lower the pressure back to normal the tire exploded, sending him across the garage and micro pieces of the tire into his eyes. He spent two days in a hospital having pieces removed! We had a similar explosion with a big front tire with only 20lbs pressure. We knew it was too old for its own good but kept refilling it every workday. When it did explode, an employee and I were 50 feet away and nearly got knocked down! Bottom lines: seemingly low-pressure Ag tires are dangerous if you push them past a reasonable age, and, always wear goggles when doing half the questionable things we do daily.

(Argyle NY) Another beautiful month with abundant sunshine and mild temperatures. An inch of rain last week was welcome. Other than a bed and a half of spinach planted 3-4 weeks ago, not a lot has happened since our change to winter crops in our 3 high tunnels (144' long). Pole beans had amazing production this summer and are coming out to make room to plant winter kale this week, but most summer crops are still cranking. Tomato plants are green and healthy with good production except Brandywine, and tomato hornworms are still around!

We purchased a newer Sioux steamer to steam beds in tunnels, which we haven't done in 3 years. A few weeds are coming back but the effects of prior steaming, for 3 years in a row, made a huge difference. We will do a bunch of beds this fall, also hoping for some disease control, and will rent the steamer rented to others.

No frost in sight, so no row-covering outside and we are not pushing to plant winter crops in the tunnels as early as we had to with past planting schedules. We will experiment with mini heads of lettuce this winter since it has become so mild. It's something that wasn't likely to succeed 10 years ago.

We are doing the salad mix seedings in strip trays in the greenhouse then transplanting after 25-30 days. This gives better stands and buys us time, plus allows tomatoes to continue. We also doing a winter tunnel arugula variety trial for production and disease resistance.

Like many other we seek a worker or two or the fall/winter and are also looking down the road on what to do with the farm long term. So many decisions and options as many farmers age out, hoping for young and ambitious farmers to take over!

UPDATES FROM THE UVM PLANT DIAGNOSTIC CLINIC

Ann Hazelrigg, Extension Plant Pathologist

Garlic- Seeing a lot of damage in garlic from Fusarium. This is a common fungus that is in all soils and can cause a substantial drop in saleable product and can impact fall planting. The pathogen likes warmer temperatures and is favored by rains and higher humidity. The wrappers may look fine on the outside but once opened, pink fungus or brown/whitish sunken lesions can be seen on the individual cloves. Be sure to use clean seed and rotate planting areas. Some good pictures and info here: https://sites.science.oregonstate.edu/bpp/Plant_Clinic/Garlic/Fusarium.pdf
<https://ag.umass.edu/vegetable/fact-sheets/alliums-fusarium-basal-rot>

We also did some testing in the lab on a sample for bloat nematode and found none. If anyone has some infected garlic that they know has the bloat nematode, we would like to practice extracting on a positive sample! It may be a service we can add to the lab for growers.

Late blight - It is out and about in high tunnels and fields. It will stay at bay if the weather is hot and dry but once we start having rain, high humidity, or dews/fogs at night the pathogen will perk back up. Infected tomato plants can be killed and composted. Potatoes with tubers should not be composted since the fungus-like organism could overwinter on the tuber.

Lettuce - Bottom rot seems to be prevalent in lettuce. This is caused by the soil borne fungus Rhizoctonia. The first symptom noticed is often wilting of outer leaves. Infected plants have sunken, reddish-brown lesions of varying sizes on leaf petioles and midribs that touch the soil. They can rapidly coalesce and cover the entire leaf and midrib. Sanitation is important with this disease. Till under infected crops. Choosing more upright cultivars like Romaine can be helpful.

Pumpkins - Some fields of mature pumpkins have been wiped out by Phytophthora fruit rot. It is always heartbreaking when we get heavy rains and saturated soils just when the pumpkins are orange and ready to be harvested. This soilborne fungus-like organism becomes active in water saturated soils and produces a motile spore that can cause an infection, usually where the fruit is touching the soil.

Once the fruit is infected, the pathogen produces an airborne spore that can quickly infect other pumpkins. It is sometimes tough to tell if the fruit are infected right at the beginning of harvest, but I have seen entire bins melt down from the disease that looked good at harvest. The first symptom is a water-soaked spot on the fruit that expands and then produces yeasty looking fruiting bodies and spores. Tilling under plants at the first sign of infection can help save the rest if a good border of healthy plants is also removed. This has to be done quickly otherwise the disease moves fast. Rotating out of fields into corn is always a good alternative crop. Here is more info on the destructive disease and management. Some good pictures of the water-soaked spots with more info on management can be found here: <https://ag.umass.edu/vegetable/fact-sheets/cucurbits-fungal-fruit-rots>

Strawberry - found the usual leafspot/scorch suspects on some plants but also angular leaf spot on Chandler/Jewel cultivars. This bacterial disease causes small angular spots starting on the undersides of leaves or sepals and when moist the bacteria can produce a shiny exudate.

Purchasing disease-free transplants is extremely important to prevent the introduction of the disease. In preventing the introduction of the disease. Unfortunately, nursery stock is certified virus-free but not certified to be free of bacterial or fungal diseases. If you have the disease, minimize the spread by not working in the fields when wet. There are no completely resistant cultivars but there are less susceptible cultivars. Highly susceptible cultivars include Allstar, Annapolis, Cavendish, Honeoye, and Kent. For more information and pictures go to <https://ohioline.osu.edu/factsheet/HYG-3212-11>

I am happy to look at pictures or samples. It's best to just give me a shout first and start with pictures. Ann.hazelrigg@uvm.edu, Jeffords Hall, 63 Carrigan Drive, Burlington 05495.

SOIL HEALTH UPDATES

Becky Maden, UVM Extension

Not too late to seed fall cover crops—but the sooner the better! For fall sown cover crops like winter rye, triticale, and winter wheat, earlier seeding dates produce more biomass and offer better weed suppression. If planting later than October 1, increase seeding rate to 125-150 lbs./acre. For more data, see [this study](#) from UVM's Northwest Crops and Soils Team.

Fall is a good time to soil test. Soil sampling in the fall helps assess this year's nutrient applications and plan for next season. Samples can be submitted to the [UVM Agricultural and Environmental Testing Lab](#) for \$17 per sample. For support on soil sampling or soil test analysis, contact Becky Maden, rebecca.maden@uvm.edu.

Learn more about high tunnel greens. Tune into an excellent webinar from last year on [YouTube](#) or as a podcast on [Spotify](#).

POLLINATOR SUPPORT REPORT

Laura Johnson, UVM Extension

Late summer blooms of buckwheat and pea and oat cover crops can be important nectar and pollen sources for bees getting ready to overwinter. The average number of insects observed by farmers foraging on buckwheat blossoms in six, 10-minute observations made in September were: 11 honeybees, 2 bumble bees, 2 other bees or wasps, 6 flies, and 1 moth or butterfly.

We received the following insights about mowing and cover cropping for insects and soil health from Ian Magnus at Pitney Meadows in Saratoga Springs, NY. "I have been using cover crops for soil building for on this farm I moved to 3 years ago to restore soil health. The cover crop has been a basic winter mix of winter rye, vetch, peas; summer mix is sorghum/Sudan, millet, sunflower, buckwheat, cowpea. We use buckwheat as quick cover on beds between plantings. Our insect populations have been steadily increasing. As I was mowing the winter cover crop this year, there were loads of insects. This led me to reevaluate the benefit of mowing the cover crop in its entirety at one time and thus eradicate the insect habitat. I tried several alternatives such as delayed sequential mowing and strip mowing which was then sowed to summer cover crop. These all had their own difficulties, and I have been considering a strategy of sequential mowing and sowing with an early mix (May) followed by a later mix (June)."

Check out this [brief guide](#) to “Cover Crop Sequences to Support Pollinators and Soil Health on Diversified Vegetable Farms.”

PROJECT SEEKS YOUR INPUT ON AUTOMATION AND MECHANIZATION

This project is developing plans to support regional farms in adopting automation, mechanization, and machine assistance (AMMA) technologies. A short survey to gather farmer needs, interests, and insights will help guide the direction the project takes. The survey is at <https://forms.gle/xG7oDTVbGk6QzuM89> and takes 10-15 minutes to complete; responses are confidential. Questions? yuri@hudakdesign.com

GRANT TO PAY FOR CONSERVATION-RELATED EQUIPMENT ON FARMS

The [Capital Equipment Assistance Program \(CEAP\)](#), administered by the Vermont Agency of Agriculture is for purchasing equipment that will help improve water quality and/or mitigate greenhouse gases. Applications should show requested equipment will increase or improve their utilization of conservation practices. Awards are \$25 to \$100K and there is a 10% match requirement. Deadline is Nov. 1 and there’s a [webinar](#) on Oct. 16 at 1:00 about the program and application process. Note: the description seems dairy oriented, but vegetable farms are eligible, too. The [application questionnaire](#) is quite short, and clear.

GRANTS FOR FLOOD-RELATED LOSSES IN 2024

Business Emergency Grant Assistant Program (BEGAP) applications are due November 15. Grants can cover 30% of net uncovered damages, up to \$100,000. Preference will be given to Vermont-based entities, which are food and farm businesses, organizations, or individuals who raise animals and/or grow food or crops for sale, or who operate on-farm processing operations that have experienced physical damage due to the flooding event. [See BEGAP FAQs](#) for ag.

ORGANIC CERTIFICATION SHORT COURSES

Join NOFA-VT at Vermont State University for an Organic Regulations trainings. The primer course is both online and in-person, covering organic regulations and certification. The online module is a prerequisite (\$75) to the two multi-day crops (Oct 14-15) and livestock (Oct 16-17) courses held in Randolph, VT, which are free - take one or both. In-person courses include lectures, discussion groups, and field trips to certified organic vegetable and livestock operations led by experts. Registration and details at <https://www.nofavt.org/events/organic-regulations-101>

MOFGA FARMER TO FARMER CONFERENCE

November 2-4, Sugarloaf Resort, Carrabassett Valley, Maine

This conference is known for in-depth treatment of topics. Sessions include university, extension and other ag service providers alongside farmers, with presentations followed by discussions to explore the experiences of everyone in the room. <https://www.mofga.org/farmer-to-farmer-conference/>

NEW ENGLAND VEGETABLE AND FRUIT CONFERENCE AND TRADE SHOW
Manchester NH, December 17-19

The biennial NEVFC will be held at the Doubletree by Hilton Manchester Downtown. The event features 30 educational sessions over three days, on topics related to vegetable, berry, and tree fruit crops. Visit <https://newenglandvfc.org/> for registration and accommodation details. Early bird registration discount ends Nov 30.

VVBGA ANNUAL MEETING

Hold the date! January 28, 2025. DoubleTree Hotel, S. Burlington. Please encourage companies and organizations you do business with to join the VVBGA as commercial members at <https://vvbga.org/commercial-membership> so they get an ad in the meeting booklet, and can sign up for a table in our trade show.