



VERMONT VEGETABLE AND BERRY GROWER NEWS – October 3, 2022

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

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REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

(E. Wallingford) Great blueberry season despite the dry summer. Finished picking Elliot on 9/17. It's a great late berry. Ordered 200 more blueberry plants for spring 2023. Pumpkins have good size, some still green. Finished marking out peach orchard for 2023 planting of 100 trees, trying 4 cold hardy varieties. Had first frost on 9/29.

(Westminster) We're having a good fall so far, with a near-record squash crop in good condition, while our biggest customer is buying more squash than usual. Most root crops look good and we're harvesting beets, carrots, radishes, and parsnips. The warm weather in the last few months has pushed our lettuce so it will be finished sooner than usual. We may send some of the Jamaican workers home earlier than normal.

Although sweet corn is not a big crop for us, it's been a record year and we'll be picking for a few more weeks. And we're slaughtering the last of our chickens and turkeys.

For the last two years, we've rented an Esch seeder for multi-seeding cover crops from Cheshire County Conservation District. It's doing a very good job covering a large area quickly, seeding vetch/rye, clover/rye and sprinkling in tillage radish.

Markets have been strong this year and prices are up significantly. We think our customers recognized inflation pressures early on – everything has gone up, including the price of boxes – and they have been receptive to raising prices.

(Guildhall) Despite several nights in the low 30s we've yet to get a frost thanks to ill-timed river fog. So about 30 of our 48 acres of potatoes are very much alive, and in fact looking great. We'd intended to spray vinegar, a little organic herbicide trial, but the never ceasing rain has nixed that idea, and then we winterized the spray-coups in a rush.

We'll start harvesting on 10/10 regardless of the crop conditions, but we're forecasted for lows in the mid 20's early this week and hopefully it'll be clear. We dug a truck of fresh spuds last week, for an order that couldn't wait, and it went well enough, but it's certainly a good reminder how poorly an old grimme handles long green vines.

Pumpkins were slow to color up but we're shipping heavy now.

(S. Cambridge NY) After getting only 1.9" of rain in June and July and almost draining our pond, we had a dedicated farm well drilled and are looking forward to more efficient operations next season and hopefully watering our stale seedbeds so we don't have to spend a full week weeding tiny carrots. It has been raining ever since so we haven't used it yet.

Seed garlic sales have been brisk and we only have one variety left. It has been a good year for the Italian peppers with well over 200 pounds per 100' bed and still going since we avoided a frost September 30. The carrots seem to have appreciated our efforts and are looking good but more water early on would have helped them.

The dry start to the season had advantages though. We didn't see any beet Cercospora until September and practically no SWD. We're not sure if we didn't see leafhoppers because we covered our potatoes or if they just never arrived. It was the first year in ages that our spud foliage didn't melt down in July but the drought limited production as we diverted our water elsewhere. There was no mold on the strawberries and their foliage stayed healthy.

We experimented with summer planted brassicas on black and silver beds adjacent to each other. At first it seemed like the silver reduced transplant shock in the heat and flea beetle damage but as the plants got older and shaded, the mulch the effect waned and at this point it's not clear if there is a difference in most cases. The cauliflower on the black may be a little better. However, before the silver effect wore off, we decided to set out our kale and broccoli at the end of July on silver mulch only. It looks way better than in the past so perhaps the silver gives you more of an edge in late July than in early June? We don't have black beds for controls, so we don't know.

We are pretty far south (near Bennington) and we want to sell our Brussels sprouts by the stalk in November and not do a continuous harvest, so we have been trying to grow sprouts that won't bolt. This year we did two plantings of Nautic, a late variety we like. One was started on April 15 and one around May 1, each on black and silver. The first planting did start to bolt early, so we've been removing the bottom sprouts. The second planting needs to do some quick catch up to be of good market size in November. We think that the drought had the effect of setting the second planting back way more than two weeks so we may repeat this experiment next year and perhaps a later planting with sufficient water will get us the desired result. There's no obvious difference between the black and silver beds.

(Salisbury NH) Woke to patchy frost this morning. Running out of things to sell so the farm stand closed September 30. Learned a few valuable lessons this year. Cardboard does NOT break down that quickly. I put some in permanent rows and added compost last fall. This spring the cardboard will still be pretty well preserved. Starting squash in expandable peat pellets constricts the roots - especially in a drought year. Even with watering the plants wilted frequently. Do not plant early crops of broccoli or kale without covering with insect netting. The root maggots took down many of them. Don't grow things that aren't making you money. I spend a lot of time covering arugula so the flea beetles don't get it. That's a lot of work for not much reward.

Overall am happy with the permanent beds and as much no till as possible. It really did result in less weeding. Hopefully next year will continue that trend. Fixed one problem--created another: seemed to increase the amount of slugs from having straw mulch in rows. Never had a problem with Brussels sprouts before but this year had slugs behind the sprouts!

Summer raspberries did terribly but the fall raspberries (Polka and Polana) did pretty well. Off to plan for next year.

(Plainfield NH) Harvest is going full bore. Potatoes are still in the ground, but a good chunk of roots are in bins. Onions are dried, will be topped and binned in the next couple of days. Lack of moisture hurt our potato yields but where the drip was put down, success was had with many crops. Much as we dislike the use of plastic drip tape, it really saved our backsides this year. The pumpkins and hard squash yielded the best crop in many years.

The fall raspberry crop produced light vegetation despite being on drip, but the fruit was of very good size and plants have had great production with lots of fruit left on the Carolines and Jaclyns. Anne is a great berry but has not been in high demand because the color seems to put people off.

SWD pressure was light to nonexistent this year in the small fruit. Vertebrate pest problems are amplifying with more deer, bird, rodent and now bear intrusion. With a decline in hunting popularity, animal populations are exploding. We have chipmunks and squirrels chewing holes in doors and buildings to gain access to dried and ornamental corn.

Getting to be time for soil sampling, the ritual known as "the Gathering of the Dead Machinery from the Fields" and doing much needed maintenance. Greenhouses need to be cleaned and stock plants brought in for the winter. Farmstand closes in a week and the fall CSA begins.

(Ange-Gardie, Quebec) Good season so far. Crops are in the warehouse and slowly getting sold. We had a good success seeding our winter crops in the greenhouses except for pythium in the spinach. Team is now reduced for the rest of the season and is looking forward to work with light stuff (like greens) instead of the heavy field crops (sweet potatoes, butternuts and melons).

Market seems to be better as demand has increased compared to early spring and prices are a little better. We are still learning how to do winter growing into gutter connected greenhouse. Amazing how the recipe we use into our individual greenhouses does not work in our new ones.

(Argyle NY) The rains finally came and irrigation has come to an end so our electric and diesel usage will take a break. The temperature switch was abrupt around 9/21 with colder weather now the norm.

Scrambling to get the tunnels planted but everything in them from summer is really cranking like peppers, tomatoes, and celery. Doing transplants of spinach, saliva, and bok choy as the summer stuff dies off. Kale and chard already in. Sweet potatoes still in the ground but watching ground temperature to make sure it doesn't get below 50 degrees. The dry days ahead will be helpful to get carrots, beets, and potatoes out. Overall a good year so far.

ON-LINE TOOL FOR SELECTING COVER CROPS

The Cover Crop Decision Support Tool is an online tool designed to support farm decision-making around cover crops. The tool includes a Cover Crop Explorer that provides in-depth information on more than 35 cover crop species. It also has a Species Selector that assists users in selecting individual cover crops based on plant hardiness zones, field soil and growing conditions, and cover cropping goals. The tool is available at no cost at: <http://covercrop.tools/>

PRODUCE SAFETY AND PACKSHED INFORMATION RESOURCES

Check out the SCRUB (Sanitizing and Cleaning Resources for Your Business) project information – over 50 resources on everything from bubblers, coolers, drains, floors, and handwash stations, to rats and rodents! See <https://blog.uvm.edu/cwcallah/scrub-project-resources/>. Categories include Produce Safety Planning, Water, Hygienic & Sanitary Design, Standard Operating Procedures, Training, Culture & Case Studies.

FALL POLLINATOR REPORT

Laura Johnson, UVM Extension pollinator support specialist

Late planted melons were in peak bloom at the beginning of September. Blossoms on one farm hosted activity from bumble bees, honey bees, a small carpenter bees, a sweat bees, striped and spotted cucumber beetles, and wasps. The grower noted that when planting seedless watermelon, “I like to keep them close to other cucurbits because when we fully segregated them, we had maybe a half crop, and we put on a bee attractant to get some pollination done.”

Cherry tomatoes, tomatillos, and squash blooms continued to bloom. Bumble bees and honey bees have been visiting blossoms. The squash bee, *Peponapis pruinosa*, seen June-August, ceased to make much of an appearance this month. With only a few counted, this species will likely not be seen until next year’s squash season while it overwinters in the soil as pre-pupae.

Flowering cover crops and late season wildflowers in bloom and still untouched by frost continue to provide important food resources for crop pollinators this fall as they ready themselves for overwintering. See guidance on practices to support bumble bee overwintering [Three Tips for Helping Wild Bumble Bee Queens Overwinter for Spring Crop Pollination.](#)

Interested in funding for practices that support pollinators? The USDA-NRCS offers opportunities and the EQIP application deadline for the new fiscal year is November 18. Contact your local NRCS office, see <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/vt/contact/local/>

NEW ENGLAND FRUIT AND VEGETABLE CONFERENCE

The NEFVC returns to in-person format on December 13-15, 2022, in Manchester, NH. Registration information coming soon at <https://newenglandvfc.org/>

VVBGA ANNUAL MEETING JANUARY 24 IN MONTPELIER

Our first in-person gathering in several years will be at the Capital Plaza Hotel. Commercial VVBGA members can reserve exhibit tables, and/or become a meeting sponsor, visit <https://vvbga.org/commercial-membership>

EXHIBIT AT THE VERMONT FLOWER SHOW

The Vermont Flower Show will take place March 3-5, 2023, at the Champlain Valley Expo in Essex Junction. There will be over 35 educational seminars offered, and 100 vendors will have exhibits related to horticultural/gardening, including landscape designers and architects, nurseries, florists, greenhouses, growers, garden centers, garden/home accessories and other floral/green industry/allied trade related businesses. Learn more at <https://vnlavt.org/vermont-flower-show/exhibitors/>

VERMONT NURSERY AND LANDSCAPE ASSOCIATION WINTER MEETING

February 16, 2023, at the UVM Davis Center in Burlington, VT. Details forthcoming.