



VERMONT VEGETABLE AND BERRY GROWER NEWS – October 4, 2021

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

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REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

(Westminster) Once it got going, the rain never seemed to stop this summer. A loose early tally shows we're probably a couple hundred thousand dollars down from last year's gross. The losses: all the celeriac is gone, along with two-thirds of our winter squash crop. None of the storage red cabbage is going to make it, although green cabbage is doing okay. We haven't cut any broccoli since early July and won't. There have been a few dry days but hardly enough to get our hay in besides a couple of cuts.

But on the bright side...kale and collards are holding steady, and we have great root crops. Carrots, parsnips, turnips, beets, radishes, and rutabagas all look great. Our sweet corn – other than the two acres accidentally harrowed up – has done well.

As manure has gotten scarce, we've been putting on more cover crops, especially nitrogen-fixing crops like peas and vetch, along with rye, wheat, and tillage radish. An Esch seeder rented from NRCS in Cheshire County, N.H., has allowed us to do a better job of seeding several varieties of cover crop at once.

Finally, our Jamaican workers showed us how to play cricket and have started a weekly cricket game on Sunday afternoons, which has been interesting and great fun.

(Huntington) Hot and dry June followed by cool and wet July seems to have led to interesting potato outcomes. Tuber size is generally huge, but it seems the plants reduced tuber set during June's hot and dry, so yields are very good but not excellent. Onion crop has more Fusarium than I've ever seen before - I assume from the wet July, but I'm not sure. Not a huge cull rate, but slower packout as we have to put an eye on the basal plate of each bulb as we are packing.

Fall brassicas are all ahead of schedule, but we're just pretending the cabbage isn't ready to harvest since we have more pressing, frost-sensitive crops yet to bring in. Winter squash did surprisingly well, given the amount of transplant mortality we had in our main butternut variety following planting during a cold windy spell in early June.

We've been trying to raise prices, with many inputs going up significantly in the past year and more increases on the horizon. I don't want to be caught selling our product at artificially deflated prices given what it's going to cost to put a crop in the ground next year.

(Rochester) Raspberries are liking the relatively warm fall and are still going strong. There is no frost in the forecast for the next week at least, in fact no temperature lower than 48 degrees predicted in that seven days. So, it appears we will have raspberries to pick through the long weekend at least. Sales of syrup and honey at the farm stand are stronger than ever and so are market sales. Looking forward to some down time as the end of the season approaches.... but not yet! Still picking berries while the sun shines.

(Grand Isle) It is a nice time of year with the focus on harvesting and no longer on weeding and cultivating. This year's onions are the largest in size we have ever grown. We have settled on growing on white plastic after years of trying silver and black. We have them drying in the dark with great air flow. Flower sales have been strong both wholesale and retail. Perhaps there is a greater need for color and brightness in this time of Covid blues. We look at all the fall clean-up chores and wonder how we will get them completed with the limited size of our crew. We are making lists of ideas for next year and thinking about a few crops we may drop altogether.

(Stowe) I lost more than a third of pumpkin and gourd plants this year. Some of the casualties are not much bigger now than when they were transplanted out last June. Others succumbed to wilt. Here's my theory: I had a bumper crop of winter rye this year. It was plowed under and harrowed 3 weeks before planting out transplants grown in peat pots. But those 3 weeks were extremely dry, and I wonder if the allelopathic compounds in the rye roots never had a chance to decompose. Each transplant was watered in with a fungicide and fertilizer mix when planted and each had a dedicated irrigation source. Yet they just sat there. After the dry period the plants continued to do nothing during the cool, wet days which followed. The survivors finally took off once we got into the 90° days of August.

I planted 1/3 less area of potatoes than last year and got 1/3 higher total yield. CPBs were rampant earlier in the year and it took daily inspections and hand picking to control. Bintje was OK. Fenway Red had misshapen tubers and lots of Rhizoctonia. Gold Rush was outstanding in size, quality, clean tubers, no hollow heart. Replanted Baltic Rose from last year's crop and it was beautiful, heavy yield, clean, smooth skin tubers. Finally, the winner, Huckleberry Gold, replanted from last year's leftovers. Was the best storage spud of any variety I've ever grown in 30 years here. Tall upright plants with gorgeous purple flowers were the largely untouched by the CPB. Good size, smooth tubers. Very low carbs and high level of antioxidants in the skin. Only downside was the relatively low yield per plant.

Powdery mildew on cucurbits had good control using LAL Stop G46 biological fungicide. Tank mixed with chlorothalonil or propiconazole on the ornamental varieties. Still largely disease free as of start of October. Exceptional crops this year: strawberries, raspberries, celeriac, peppers, eggplant, cauliflower, asparagus, parsnips.

(Westminster West) Heading into our last month of sales (mostly) and the end of outdoor farmers' market, then the indoor one starts. Still busy harvesting turnips, hemp, carrots, rutabagas, kale etc. oh and potatoes! Winter squash crop almost sold out already, which is a record but only due to such a poor yield from all the rains. A few varieties have done well regardless of the weather and the new introductions such as Autumn Frost did great, and they are selling.

Preparing the garlic field and hope to start planting mid-month, about the same amount as this year but adding soft necks to our mix. Cover crops look great and always so satisfying to see lush green growth this time of year. We have some major changes coming up such as closing down our spring plant wholesale business, due to life issues, I am offering up our accounts to any seriously interested parties, contact me for further info. High Meadows Farm, Putney.
hmfvermont@gmail.com

(Guildhall) The last 2 years we've started harvesting fully orange Jack O'Lanterns on 9/1, but we didn't begin pumpkin harvest this year until 9/14. Butternut, Delicata, and Sunshine Kabocha were just as late. The late ripening coupled with the Northeast's generally poor crop has made for a very busy shipping season. Our crop was smaller than it should be, I haven't yet calculated yields, but considering how poorly the cucurbits looked at the beginning of August I'm happy to have anything.

Still hasn't frosted here. We don't use herbicide to top-kill potatoes, so without the frost we've still got one field's vines really hanging on. The potato barn and the crop's pulp temp both need to be lower as well. We'll start harvesting 10/6 regardless, about usual for us. I confess to higher-than-normal anxiety because our crop looks like it'll yield so well, we're going to have to run at least 30% more trucks over the same acreage.

(Argyle NY) What a great month September was with 4.5" of rain and only one night a little below 40 degrees. Let's hope October will be just as forgiving to get the fall crops in since labor is scarce to none. Sweet potatoes are still in the ground to size up and waiting to have a crew to get them out! Leaf mold has taken over the tomatoes in the tunnel, but they are ready to be taken out. These raining days will help us get the tunnels planted and up to date. Starting September 1st, we covered our leeks with netting to keep out the allium miner, which was bad in our leeks last year, but diseases may be the bigger player this year. Our outside tomatoes were less than stellar this year so planning on more of them in the tunnels next year. Brassicas are seeing a bit of Alternaria even though we hot water treat. But so far all our fall crops look great this year. Most of our late planted potatoes are still green and the surprise was no leaf hoppers this year! We haven't had potato beetles since 1999. Sales are average right now but are building up as fall progresses.

(Plainfield NH) No frost here in the Upper Valley. Still harvesting a great fall raspberry crop. Even though we have drip on them, the 15 plus inches of water in July really banked some moisture and I think we are reaping the rewards of that, we are re-thinking our watering practices on this and our blueberries. Strawberries have made wonderful growth and show a lot of crop potential for 2022...just got to get through the winter....

Onions are up, and in the middle of carrot and potato harvest, both crops look really clean with moderate to good yields, again variety driven. We seeded and transplanted into a crimped heavy crop of winter rye, and then were hit by deer and drought. They ate all the emerging seedlings. Between that, labor shortage at the time. Total loss.

We are reconsidering the role that no till will have on our farm. There are unquestionable savings in soil prep and soil health benefits, but we have struggled with providing adequate fertility to our corn. Injecting ammonia through a knife system may be the only secure way to provide N. Until now we have struggled with the system and have not produced dependable crops. I am sure it will be a big topic of discussion over the winter among us.

Sales still seem strong; not the freakish levels of 2020, but still robust. We close our farmstand Columbus Day, and that will trigger the process all over again. Greenhouse will be cleaned and prepped for the ornamental season. We are looking into LED fixtures for our prop house as the 30-year-old wiring could use a little upgrading and it seems like it might be the right time to make the move from HID sodium and metal halide. Also, we need to retrofit our heated benches, as the tubing has degraded, leaving the bench with hot and cold spots, making for creative movement of plant flats and propagation trays.

APPLY FOR FREE SUPPLIES FROM THE VT AGENCY OF AGRICULTURE

The Produce Program of the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food, and Markets (VAAF) is providing Vermont produce farms with new harvest crates, storage bins, and cleaning supplies to improve produce safety and efficiency. Farms must [apply](#) for the produce safety supply kits by **Friday, October 22nd at 12 PM.**

Produce Safety Supply Kit Contents:

- [TranPak Collapsible Plastic Crate 64x18](#)
- [TranPak Attached Lid Container 22x15x12.8](#)
- [VIKAN Short Handle Brush \(Orange\)](#)
- [VIKAN 10" Double Blade Ultra Hygiene Bench Squeegee \(Green\)](#)
- [VIKAN 3 Gallon Hygienic Pail \(Blue\)](#)

Eligible farms must:

- Be enrolled in the [Vermont Produce Portal](#).
- Grow, harvest, pack, or hold “covered produce” as defined by the U.S. Food & Drug Administration’s (FDA) Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) [Produce Safety Rule](#).

Farms of all sizes are encouraged to apply. Priority will be given to farms with average annual produce sales of greater than \$28,561 over the past three years.

If your application is selected, you will need to pick up your supply kit at the Vermont Agriculture and Environmental Lab. Please direct any questions to Gina Clithero at gina.clithero@vermont.gov or 802-585-6225.

RESOURCES FROM UVM EXT AG ENGINEERING TEAM

Chris Callahan and Andy Chamberlin

New Podcast Episodes:

Growing from 1/4 to 3 Acres at Old Road Farm: EP53

Custom Beiler/Rimol Greenhouses with Roll-up End Walls: EP54

Listen on your favorite podcast player or visit the website <https://agengpodcast.com>

Spring Cleaning - Farm Cooler Checklist: The fall may be a good time to clean out that cooler before it gets filled up with storage crops or put away for the season. We highlight several items to inspect and clean when you give your cooler some seasonal attention.

<https://go.uvm.edu/coolercleaning>

Our multi-state team is creating and sharing educational resources to improve produce safety and efficiency on your farm. These SCRUB Twilight Highlight Webinar Recordings are now available. Visit <https://go.uvm.edu/srub> events to view webinars on the following topics: Bins, Low Cost Packshed, Wash/Pack Floors, Wash Water, Employee Management and Bubblers