



Vermont Vegetable and Berry News – Oct. 9, 2012
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REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

(Fairfax) SWD sure loves this warm weather. John Hayden from The Farm Between discovered an easy tip for figuring out if fruit is infected which has been helpful in picking. If the receptacle of the raspberry is stained after picking then it likely has SWD larvae. Our fall raspberries are infected at 50% or more, but the cold weather should really knock them down so we're hoping to get some more picking in, and we're hoping we can control them in next year's strawberries. Planting fall broccoli 3 miles from our swede midge infected kale field has worked. We have fabulous fall broccoli. Now we have to figure out how to keep running away from the swede midge next year. Enjoying the frost-free weather; looks like we get another week at least which should give us some more lettuce cutting and pepper picking. Next year looks like a real challenge with all these new pests: leek moth, SWD and swede midge!

(Montpelier) Greenhouses are almost ready for winter; all the planting is done. My biggest problem in the field is the deer; worst pressure I have ever had. I lose a little bit each year and put up with it but when I go out and there are 9 does and 2 four-point bucks just feeding on my cabbage, broccoli, strawberries, chard, parsley, even eating the summer squash stems?! Winter work-place CSA is launched but taking a breather before winter season gets going. Value-added product sales continue to be strong. Almost done with all the end-of-season processing for winter soup, etc. production. White plastic is the way to go under greenhouse summer crops; another advantage besides extra light at each end of the season is it's easier cleaning out the houses in the fall and fewer volunteer tomatoes etc. Seeing a lot of voles and field mice, I think they are going to be a real issue this winter.

(Guilford) This is our second year with SWD (we were the first farm in VT to report it last year after Irene) and once again we're getting great quality fall raspberries late in the season, after trying some organic spray earlier and then just walking away in disgust. Is it a photoperiod, temperature effect? Would anyone with similar observations or ideas on why this might be please let Vern know, to pass on to others.

We do have some SWD present now, but damage dropped off drastically as of a week and a half ago. This doesn't seem to correlate too directly to our first cold nights, but can't rule it out. Does anyone have temp sensors/temp data for your raspberry fields and any SWD pattern observations? Other news: the slowest dahlia year ever and they're getting going just as we have some close calls for frost forecast. Starting to set up hoops now so the afternoon scrambles are reduced to coverings and clips.

(S. Royalton) Now that the season is over, I glad I didn't spend the big money to scrape the Irene flooding deposits off my field. Most farmers around me scraped it off. I figured that it will be good soil at some point. There's no N, P or K in it, and no organic matter, but it also has almost no weeds. We learned that it grew things just fine when you double the fertilizer application, and can get water on it. Next year I'll double compost it and I'm guessing within 3 to 5 years it will be back to health.

(W. Brookfield) All the greens for winter have all germinated successfully in the high tunnels. The summer CSA has officially ended. It is time to get the garlic planted. It has been an amazing season with minimal pests and disease except serious squash bug infestation!

(Woodbury) Winding down, grateful for the prospect of a little rest. Want to spread compost and do some final field work, but it's too wet. Still picking tomatoes, and I am reluctant to gut the greenhouse just yet. Squash is holding ok, I wish the Sunshine stored better. Squash sales at the market have been slow. The most beautiful broccoli and cauliflower I have ever grown has made me feel like a real farmer. The lure and pressure of winter market gets stronger this time of the year. Maybe a support group for growers who want to stop for the winter is in order.

(Warren) Moved high tunnels today. The best thing about movable high tunnels is that they are movable. The worst thing is that you have to move them. Seems like a lot of work until you look back at the mountain of tomato vines etc. and remind yourself how much work it is to pull that stuff out. Root crops are next. Carrots looking really good; beets, turnips, parsnips just OK. Cabbage, broccoli and cauliflower are a little behind so we hope for mild weather the next few weeks so they can size up. Farm store is closed for the season. It's nice to just have pallets ready for wholesale pickup instead of the nickels and dimes of retail. Sometimes I wonder which is more profitable in the end.

(Williston) We have had over 2" of rain in the past week making things soggy. No hard frost yet but shorter days keep growth to slow pace. The bugs are less but still present. Leafhoppers and an occasional stink bug. Winter cover crop of oat/peas/vetch growing nice with all this rain.

It is so hard to pull plants that are still producing to put in cover crop for winter and too late now for that anyway. Taking soil samples this week in hoophouse and in fields to get a jump on spring to-do list.

(Westminster West) Still no frost, very nice! Fall carrots and beets are still growing and selling well. Spinach is going crazy but I can't seem to sell much, why? Turnips are massive and bug free. Greenhouse tomatoes are still producing wonderful amounts of fruit, happy I made the transition to grafting this year! Yields and profits are 50% ahead of last year. We await drier weather so we can finish preparing the garlic fields. Expanding garlic acreage due to increased demand for both our seed stock and for table stock from CSAs and wholesale accounts. Last of mums and asters heading out this week, best crop ever. Had our GAP inspection, passed but what a pain! But we all have a raised awareness of food safety, so that's a good thing. Still lots to harvest, and much to do but we love this time of year, cover crops look full and lush.

(Tunbridge) Amazing fall, still no frost. Picking red peppers that were never covered. Still have basil in the field, double covered. Beans still need picking each week. Trying to get the carrots out of the field before the deer totally do them in. They are getting smart enough to lift up the bird netting. Nice fall greens: spinach, tatsoi, pak choi, dandelion, kale and chard. Red squirrels wreaking havoc in barn with the squash. Fall broccoli has been beautiful, makes me want to keep growing the stuff. The shoots are even larger than the heads we normally get. Radish have no worms, turnips (Gilfeather) and rutabagas are nice even though they were transplanted a good two weeks late, and it was dry all summer. Mesclun lettuce in the field is finally getting to look like it won't hold up well if picked for the mix, so I guess that is something I can cross off the list for market. Have barely started prepping for garlic. Finally got our barrel washer going, works great; I happened to be using it during CSA pick up and it was a great source of entertainment.

(Norwich) Still picking zukes and castada and a great Hail Mary planting of sweet corn. Also great late beans. Kept late melons coming until Oct 1 after nuking them with copper. Best carrot crop in years thanks to long stale bed preparation and timely weeding and water. Covering late greens with punched plastic and putting out greens in early emptied tomato greenhouse. Finished mowing late, July planted spuds and digging like crazy. No blight this year! Very promising results from extensive legume green manures during spring and summer. Trying to grow our own nitrogen especially given loss of Chilean Nitrate for organic practice. Several fall crops had no additional fertility besides green manures and are doing very well.

(Londonderry) Still harvesting fall raspberries and gold berries but maybe not after tonight, frost predicted. Last summer farmers markets' for us in, great sales in Jamaica last Sunday. Had a bumper crop of our heirloom garlic. Excellent early July planting of fingerlings fresh dug for Columbus day crowds. Our mountain loam is wet, and need to get garlic seed in and last harvest out. Did not have a bad pest year except for wild turkeys.

(Marlboro) Our first season dealing with SWD, when they appeared in the summer raspberries about mid-July. Traps put out in early July failed to catch any flies. It seemed that once ripe fruit was available, the flies preferred that. The infestation wasn't bad, and regular careful picking eliminated infected fruit in the baskets. It wasn't until early August that the SWD really took off, infecting blackberries and late blueberries. A berry infected had an unmistakable soft quality to it, and in blueberries it caused ripe fruit to fall from the bushes. For confirmation, all one had to do was to pull a berry apart to see a maggot or two within the fruit. We then put out traps in the fall raspberries with a lot of success before the crop ripened. Again, once berries were ripe they were preferred by the flies. The SWD seemed to prefer totally ripe berries buried in the middle of the rows. Spraying had mixed results. We used Spinosad and Pyrethrum, with better control from the Spinosad. The best method of control was daily picking and picking very slightly under ripe fruit. (Not a berry grower's preference!) About mid-September when nights started getting cold and we had a couple of light frosts, the SWD just about stopped attacking the fall raspberries. Unfortunately, an extremely large population of yellow jackets and hornets took over, going after the best berries. I wondered if they had been attracted to the SWD damaged fruit or if it had to do with the dry summer, or, of course any number of things. A few days of warm weather brought back the occasional fruit fly, so they are not gone for the season. Hoping for a really hard winter to knock them back a bit and will see what their second season here will be like.

(Ferrisburgh) Enough rain already, fields have standing water in the low areas making it difficult to put a tractor in them to harvest winter squash, carrots, and potatoes. Sweet corn is coming to an end as is the late watermelon. Winter rye looking good although needs to dry out to finish seeding some of the fields. Farmers' markets are winding down, rain hasn't helped sales there. Sunshine the rest of the month would let us finish on a high note.

(Plainfield NH) We closed our farmstand on Columbus Day. Wholesale continues as well as a 6 week fall CSA. A great crew to finish with, but not enough bodies and much needs to be done. Still have summer raspberry pruning, a trip through blueberries to pull buckthorns and other invasives; horsenettle has shown up on the river and that is a concern. Still have root crops in the ground and machinery and infrastructure to deal with.

We have to address our labor management issues over the winter to accommodate the loss of high school and college students in what is essentially becoming the middle of the season. Cover crops are down and growing nicely, still harvesting raspberries and sweet corn although nobody seems that interested in buying it at this time of year. We are picking the most delicious and tender bicolor but people are just interested in other things this time of the year. Wholesale accounts have been strong this fall. Garlic needs to get planted in next couple of weeks and hopefully we will have time to get some of the dandelions out of the strawberries. (New Haven) Good pumpkin crop, still picking tomatoes, cukes, summer squash, corn and peppers. Fields are very wet; will have a hard time putting them to bed for winter.

(Plainfield) Big crop of red peppers, mostly Carmen. Combination of Dipel sprays and Trichogramma releases gave good control of borers and the rot they cause. Fall raspberries got past a SWD attack, used Entrust alternating with Pyganic. Lots of yellow jackets. Winter squash selling well. Lots of root crops to harvest, wash and ship before the weather turns cold.

(Granville NY) Fall storage crops looking great. Finished harvesting sweet potatoes today; yield was excellent at 1.2 twenty bushel bin per 300 ft double row on 4 ft plastic. Huge yield difference based on soil type, the driest, sandiest, soil was best. Potato yield was decent despite major leafhopper damage. Fall beets, carrots, cabbage, turnips look good. Greenhouses start the switch to greens this week. Field greens look a little small right now. Brussels never looked good this year and have major disease. Fall broc and cauliflower side shoot production is over the top. Onion production was good but not excellent. Grateful for no floods this year!

(Keene NH) Relieved to have a sunny day to hoe some of the winter greens in the hoop house we're about to cover. Still harvesting tomatoes from the greenhouse, peppers and eggplant from the field, no frost yet. Each week I warn CSA members that flowers are about to end, but they keep going. Our winter squash, onion and potato yield was low this year so I was going to nix the winter CSA but instead we're trying a whole-diet CSA, two pickups a month, Nov. thru Feb., with ground beef, choice of dairy product and some veggies (fewer storage crops, more greens from the hoop house). Hoping that fields dry out enough next week to bed shape the part of the pick your own field that is too wet for spring tractor work.

(Weare NH) We put in 450 transplants of spinach, lettuce and arugula in raised beds with covers. Some for fall harvest; some for over wintering. Getting the ground prepped for the new high tunnel. Still lots to harvest. Markets going well despite some disagreeable weather. Transitioning to winter markets while finishing up summer markets. All in all a great season.

(Enfield NH) Winter squash in and looking good. Behind on the potatoes. Other root crops all looking good and selling well; still have a lot to harvest. Lettuce doing well, but some disease. Broccoli and other brassicas growing very well, deer are really enjoying them, did not fence enough, now trying row cover and radios to lessen damage. It does not help that all the brassicas are in a remote field. Cover crops on several fields, trying to get a lot on this week. Continue to produce lots of colored peppers (red and yellow), not many green any more. Greenhouse tomatoes still coming, cherries doing well, grapes are getting small and not doing as well. Beets had a great year.

(Little Compton RI) Much needed rain finally showed up that will save my six acres of broccoli, cauliflower and Brussels sprouts that were suffering since they went in late August. One symptom of the drought was Mg deficiency. The water restriction must have locked up the ability for it to move through the plant. The weak plants allowed Alternaria to get a foothold. Another problem we're battling are cabbage aphids. We have thrown soap, Pyganic and Entrust at them and they just won't quit. I need to start earlier next year before their numbers get too high. Our new system for topping Brussels sprouts is to wait till the lower sprouts have grown to the size of our pinky; no more counting off days and doing them automatically. That can make the tops swell much faster than the bottoms and made them harder to retail. Doing our major planting in our winter houses this week and another next week. These early October plantings are critical for predictable sustained greens production during the dead zone production period from mid-Dec. 11 thru mid-Feb.

(Hampton NY) It is snowing on Killington as I write. Sweet corn is done and pumpkins sales are starting to outpace pumpkin thefts. All peppers varieties are still producing despite the cool weather. Kale plants are almost 4 feet tall with collards trying to keep up. Swiss chard is starting to fall behind. Brussels sprouts are looking good and starting to get some size. The cauliflower didn't do well this year and all the rain is starting to rot the cabbage. Still finding squash bugs in the garden at various stages of maturity; mice and moles under the landscaping fabric. Started pulling the fabric back and planting rye, which will be covered back up in spring. I am hoping that this will help reduce some insect pressure along with adding organic matter to the soil.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Oct 10. Swede Midge workshop, Intervale Community Farm, Burlington, 3-5 pm.

Oct. 16. Panel discussion on NRCS programs for farmers, Cobb Hill, Hartland, 6-8 pm. For info call 802-291-9100

Oct. 18. Healthy Soils for a Healthy Environment. Littlewood Farm, Plainfield, 1:30- 4:00 pm. For info or to RSVP by Oct. 16 contact Justin Kenney (802) 828-4493 x113 or justin.kenney@vt.nacdnet.net.

Nov. 7-8. Northeast Greenhouse Conf. Worcester MA. <http://www.negreenhouse.org/>