



VERMONT VEGETABLE AND BERRY GROWER NEWS – November 1, 2021

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

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REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

(Guildhall) We're still harvesting but anticipate finishing by the end of the first week of November. It's been a historic year for us. Highest yielding potato crop we've ever grown by a long measure. Not all the math has been done yet, but we've got about 14,000 cwt into storage already (76 trucks averaging bettering 19,000# a truck). Stand out performers have been Lehigh, Peter Wilcox, and Bel Mondo. Norwis suffered a bit quality wise, but mostly because (I think) the field they were on was 2 years out of 30-year-old hay. Some scab and some wire worm damage.

Our highest yielding area was a 12-acre field of golds that did 470 cwt to the acre, a yield that'll be a lot of years before we top (unless we irrigate). New varieties to us, NY-149 (gold) & NY-150 (Upstate Abundance) were both unremarkable in yield and tuber size. NY-150 has a chef/foody cult following and I was excited to try it, but I am disappointed to report that it tastes like a small white potato.

Harvest has been mostly smooth, with breakdowns getting turned around quickly, aside from potato trucks, which just get parked. October weather has been unusually good, thank goodness. The main thing slowing us down this harvest season is that we can't speed up unloading trucks in an antique top load barn like ours. It may only take 20 minutes to load the truck, but it will always take at least an hour to unload. And the closer to capacity the barn becomes, the slower the process of jamming spuds into hard-to-reach places.

Another interesting problem is that the yield has been so heavy that our Grimme GB1500 (circa 1989) had trouble digging 2 rows with 2 or 4 rows windrowed on top, there's just too many spuds and the harvester would lose a lot of them off the rear paddles. So, we've direct dug most of the crop, but that hasn't slowed us down much. Our crew is tired (4 people), there haven't been hardly any days off or short days this month, but they're pros and brought great attitudes to work every day. All in all, amazing year, hopefully the potatoes store well. If anyone needs NEK grown potatoes for their CSA hit us up.

(Westminster) We've had another 3 to 4 inches of rain since our last report, but most of our crops are in. Several acres of carrots left to harvest, and kale, collards, and radishes still going strong. The wet year really did a number on several crops. This is the earliest we've ever sold out of winter squash, for instance.

The most disturbing long-term issue this year is the amount of galinsoga seed that's going into the seed bank – I don't believe we'll recover from that in my lifetime. The wet weather is one reason: We couldn't cultivate some crops when they got larger. And because of the late frost—and not even a killing frost yet – the galinsoga was able to set seed in some of the sparsely seeded cover crops. But we're seeing, in two fields, one seeded with peas and oats and another with wheat and tillage radish, that the galinsoga was shaded out, in contrast to winter rye cover crop. I think we have been too sparse in our cover crop seeding because we have such a large acreage to cover. But it may be worth it to buy that extra seed, especially the leafy tillage radish, in the future.

The Esch seeder, rented through the Cheshire County (NH) Conservation District, was particularly helpful this year in planting two different varieties of cover crop onto a field. We finally got our new washing/pack line up and running. There are still a few bugs to work out, but it will meet food safety protocols as well as cut our packing time in half. A good thing because we have real concerns about long-term availability of labor. Local workers are now practically nonexistent.

(Elmore) We've had the largest most perfect apples ever at our farm this season, with zero inputs. The best fall weather I can ever remember for inventory and fieldwork. Such a gift. Working with the crew to get many fall projects done so spring will be as least overwhelming as possible. Had unusually large crops of kiwiberries and peaches and harvested over 2000 lbs. of plums! Even had a crop of American persimmons on one tree in the high tunnel.

(Burlington) Over the last 30 years our first frost continues to push farther into October, settling in the wee hours of 10/28 this year. In the 1990s, I'd expect our first frost around 10/1, with a late outlier in the 10/8-10/12 range. Now we've had two years running (plus all the incremental creep over the last 20 years) of first frost around November 1. Spring hasn't changed in the field much, but autumn sure has shifted later.

Our outdoor season overall was solid, with normal ups and downs among crops. I was reminded this year after a wetter June and July (compared to 2020) that summer rainfall can boost both yields, and diseases, beyond what we achieve with our regular and consistent irrigation. Despite August, September, and October totaling up at similar rainfall to 2020, our mid-September through late fall harvest has seen much more disease in Alliums, Brassicas and Cucurbits. On the flip side, the cooler weather with regular rainfall improved yields in our potato crop, onion crop, and summer carrot crop markedly over 2020. While irrigation can add water, it can't do much to address heat stress, which may be a bigger factor in hotter summers than I'd like to admit.

2021 featured many more field insect troubles than usual with early and ubiquitous infestations of squash bugs, Colorado Potato beetles, Potato Leafhopper, Mexican Bean Beetle, Onion Thrips, Brassica flea beetle, and several different field aphids. Our tunnels were madly afflicted with aphids, though managed to avoid major powdery mildew in tomatoes, despite the higher humidity from our cooler and wetter fall. I hope that this is not a sign of the new normal explained by our shorter, warmer winters.

(Orwell VT) High tunnel summer crops just kept on producing with no frost and balmy daytime temperatures, but house by house, we planted greens for winter sales. Even though it felt we were late getting them in, our timing for harvest should work out well, with most of our salad coming on strong mid-November, and hopefully lasting through March. We experimented using the paper pot system with a tool called a zipper, that opens the soil in one direction, and covers the transplants in the other. We also finally bought a drop seeder that fits the paper pot trays, and it's amazing how much time simple efficiencies save. One effort we made to reduce vole and rodent pressure in the tunnels is a clean mow and weed whack around all edges to reduce their cozy winter habitat. We've already lost a fair amount of spinach to nibbling pressure. Now we're moving onto tightening up roll ups, closing end vents, and buttoning up for winter weather!

(Plainfield NH) It appears that cherry tomatoes, peppers, and eggplant will make it to November 1. No killer frost yet here, and the flavor of the of the few remaining fall raspberries is unbelievably sweet and flavorful. This wonderful fall has repaid us for the transgressions Mother Nature installed upon us with the drought in May/June and 16 inches of rain in July. The extended season allowed us to extract more product later into the season. A sign of climate change for sure, but there had to be a bright side.

With the farmstand closed on Columbus Day, we have focused on the deep fall CSA and with markets strong, there was plenty of demand for product, so sales were strong the past month. In between we drilled in cover crops, harvested sweet potatoes and more carrots, and did some field cleanup. We won't catch up from being so far behind, but we will close the gap. We are moving bins of potatoes and onion into the pack /storage shed, and my shop is a balmy 80 degrees while we cure the short crop of sweet potatoes. A few pumps have been dragged back to the shop, and soon we hope to commence on fall servicing of the equipment.

A light frost finally stopped a bumper crop of Galinsoga which had a great year in the extended fall weather, completely engulfing the strawberries. More problematic is the effort with which wild grapevines, knotweed and buckthorn are establishing a beachhead in the blueberry fields. Most of our problems come in with the hardwood chips that we have been using. I would love to be able to mulch with some alternative materials. Perhaps something like corn cobs with some significant carbon structure? Interested in alternative mulches that others maybe using.

(Argyle NY) Even with this fall being the warmest on record we haven't caught up yet. Last week was our first frost of 32 degrees and another 31 degrees later. We have the least rowcovers we have ever put out in the fall. That means more time to harvest and get prepared for winter but not happening! Scant crew is most of the reason for still having carrots and potatoes in the ground while garlic and onions are waiting to be planted. Tunnel planting has been behind with some seeded yesterday. Maybe we will all learn something!

Sweet potatoes have a high percentage of wire worm damage even though we applied nematodes at planting. First time it didn't work. We have had great results for 3 years running controlling them but not this year. Carrots are showing a lot of rot problems also due to the rains, but the potatoes look great. We will get cabbage and other brassica storage crops out today before the cold settles in midweek. Smaller tunnels are also needing to go up to protect lettuce and overwintering onions. A busy month is upon us!

PUT YOUR VVBGA SOIL HEALTH WEB SITE TO WORK

Fall is the time to get your soil health records organized! The new VVBGA soil health website will keep soil test results, amendment plans and logs all in one place! Log into <https://vvbga.org/> (same site as CAPs) and click on "soil health". Contact Becky Maden for any questions or assistance. Rebecca.Maden@uvm.edu

UPDATE FROM UVM EXTENSION AG ENGINEERING

Andy Chamberlin and Chris Callahan

We have a new video highlighting a DIY starts and germination chamber at Old Road Farm. <https://youtu.be/wUWbZwxyjf0>

A new blog post titled "Building a Better Greens Bubbler" contains information on design considerations, a wiring diagram, a video overview of building a bubbler, examples from other farmers in the Northeast, tips on how to clean a bubbler with downloadable SOP and a link to a recent SCRUB Webinar on greens bubblers. Visit: <https://go.uvm.edu/bubblers>

POLLINATOR SURVEY

If you have not yet completed this 3-minute survey, please do. Your responses will guide plans for UVM Extension / VVBGA research and education projects aimed at supporting wild pollinators on farms. <https://forms.gle/4G3s1vm64aNj1xaV8>

And here's the web site where we are compiling practical information; suggestions are welcome: <https://go.uvm.edu/pollinators-resources>

SOILBORNE PATHOGEN TRIAL RESULTS AND GROWER SURVEY

This 5-minute survey summarizes results of a study that tested 2 organic methods to control the soilborne pathogen *Rhizoctonia solani* in field-grown lettuce on 2 Vermont farms over 2 seasons, and then asks a few questions about your thoughts on the trial results. The survey is anonymous and voluntary. Your responses will help the researchers plan future studies on organic soil pathogen control methods. Please visit <https://redcap.med.uvm.edu/surveys/?s=87LAH4LHP7>

IMPORTANT DATES FOR VERMONT NRCS FUNDING APPLICATIONS

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) accepts applications year-round, but to be considered for this year's funding, producers and landowners should apply by specific "ranking dates" for key programs, such as the [Environmental Quality Incentives Program](#) (EQIP), [Conservation Stewardship Program](#) (CSP), [Agricultural Conservation Easement Program](#) (ACEP), [Regional Conservation Partnership Program](#) (RCPP) and [Agricultural Management Assistance](#) (AMA) program. The ranking dates are **December 31, 2021**, for EQIP, AMA, and RCPP 2014. **February 11, 2022**, for CSP, RCPP 2018, and ACEP

These programs provide technical and financial assistance to help producers and landowners make conservation improvements on their land that benefit natural resources, build resiliency, and contribute to the nation's broader effort to combat the impacts of climate change. Growers are encouraged to contact your [local Vermont NRCS field office](#) to learn more, whether you have not yet worked with NRCS or you want to take conservation to the next level on your land.

UPCOMING EVENTS

MOFA Farmer to Farmer Conference

Today thru Nov. 7. <https://www.mofga.org/farmer-resources/farmer-to-farmer-conference/>

Produce Safety Alliance (PSA) Grower Training Course via Zoom

Dec. 8-9 from 12-5 pm via Zoom. Cost: \$30/attendee

This grower training course meets the regulatory requirements of the Food Safety Modernization Act for farms subject to the Produce Safety Rule. All farms are welcome to attend to learn about food safety practices for growing, handling, and storing fresh produce. You'll need a computer or tablet with microphone and camera connected to high-speed internet. Registration fee includes a course manual and certificate of course completion by the Association of Food and Drug Officials. To receive certificate, you must be engaged and present for the entire course. Registration deadline is Nov. 19, go to <https://enych.cce.cornell.edu/event.php?id=1586>
Questions? Elisabeth Hodgdon at 518-650-5323 or eh528@cornell.edu

New England Vegetable and Fruit Conference 2021-Online Light!

December 13-17. <https://nevbga.com/nevfc/>

The program will be a streamlined version of our usual in-person content, with one morning and one afternoon session per day for one week. Tree fruit, small fruit, and vegetables will all be covered, and pesticide and certified crop advisor credits are available. \$50 registration fee gains you full access to the program and 3-months access to the recordings. Session topics include Tillage Reduction Innovations, Climate Adaption Strategies on the Farm, Soil Health, Automation for Small Vegetable Growers, Inspirations from Away, 2 Berry Crop Sessions and 2 Tree Fruit Sessions as well as a session on Vegetable Disease and Pest Updates.

HOLD THE DATE: VVBGA ANNUAL MEETING

Tuesday Jan. 25, 2022