



Vermont Vegetable and Berry News – Nov. 13, 2012
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REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

(Warren) Nothing left in the fields besides a few Brussels sprouts. I finally feel like I know my field plan for next year and have cover cropped accordingly. N fixing crops are preceding most cash crops next year. We will start harvesting salad greens out of high tunnels this week. I swear that the winter greens are the easiest money we make. Compost is made, equipment serviced. Time to start pondering equipment upgrades and finish next year's marketing plan.

(Dummerston) Winding down our field work with the harvest of root crops for the winter CSA. Nice weather makes for comfortable washing. Some of our nicest broccoli of the season looking good in the field. Longer, milder growing season has us rethinking some planting schedules. Trying to keep tunnels cool to deter aphids in the greens. Have had good luck with Aphidoletes and a light bulb on at night. Ladybugs are available now, good for hot spots and they store in the refrigerator for up to 4 weeks. Critters running rampant around storage crops. It's like something out of a Stephen King movie. Snapping traps keeping me up at night. Larger rodents wearing them as a decorative collar. Seeded carrots in a tunnel early August and looks like we finally got the timing right. Mixed good news for organic growers: biodegradable mulch now allowed for organic production but probably not until 2014.; Chilean nitrate not yet banned but probably will be in 2013.

(Shelburne/S.Burlington) Now that I have two winter greenhouses I am really interested in how little differences in weather or management affect temperature in them. In particular I am figuring out how many days of sun in a row equal growth on my plants even in cold temps. I know that several sunny days in a row, like 4, then means significant growth can happen even when night time temps are in the 20's. But, sunny days flanked with cloudy, colder days almost negate any potential chance for growth. While this is out of our control, I am interested in tracking the cumulative buildup of heat that results in growth.

I'm growing cilantro in a reasonable quantity this year for the first time and seeing how it does. I have grown winter cilantro for years in very small quantities and never paid detailed attention to its yield over Nov-April, but now I will be keeping track of yields and seeing if it is worth growing in winter.

(Elmore) We have 2,000 lb. of Jerusalem artichokes ready to dig, but the local stores will only buy 10 lbs. at a time; any suggestions on how to store them to fill orders over the winter, or how to market them in larger amounts? We are putting bark chips around a lot of our berry plants hoping this will help them make it through, even if there is not much snow cover. Planting out trials of our own black currants and seedling peaches. Always dreaming of finding the tastiest, hardiest newcomer with wonderful qualities for growing in the north country.

(Burlington) Lovely end to the season. CSA members very happy with our summer season; hoping winter share works out to their liking as well. It looks like our post-Irene decline in CSA signups will only last one season; enthusiasm is high for 2013 after a strong 2012. Looking forward to next year when we'll have fully functioning facilities for three or four different storage conditions ready at harvest time. The longer I go, the more I appreciate how much our business margin can turn on where to put things and how many times we have to shuffle them around.

(Westminster West) Still picking field spinach, it refuses to die and we like it! Winter squash moving steady thru multiple channels, almost sold out of most items now. Whiteflies on our tunnel kale; never had that before, chard is clean in the same tunnel. Just finished picking tunnel tomatoes but still picking enough tunnel raspberries to make it worthwhile, and stand customers still want them. It's great to have good weather to do fall maintenance chores. Putting new greenhouse plastic on some houses soon, never a fun job. Analyzing this year's results and starting next year's plan. Looking forward to change of pace and maybe a vacation.

(Hampton NY) Kale, collards and Swiss chard still being harvested despite several hard frosts and temps in the lower 20's. Most of the Brussels sprouts have good size and will be harvested for Thanksgiving and the last of the carrots will be harvested this weekend. Winter rye cover crop is doing well, ranges from 3" to 8" tall. Time to start planning for the 2013 growing season and see which conferences we will be attending. We are also looking into various game cameras that have a video feature to install as a theft deterrent.

(Underhill and Jericho) The warm weather created fantastic growing conditions and local production records.

Our new Local-Market-Coop members are still selling garlic, greens, kale, onions, potatoes, squash and tomatoes. We beat the freeze and ripened all late tomatoes indoors, extending our sales season by a month! This is the last week for beautiful #1 slicers; the second week of Nov!

(Barton) We just finished our fourth year of farming and first year of CSA; we couldn't be happier with the response that we have received from our friends, neighbors and fellow farmers who offered so much help and input. We have wrapped up now since the cold spell and are in the process of putting up a new greenhouse for starts, using hot water heat from the wood boiler that also heats our house.

(Plainfield NH) Clean up and fall maintenance continues. Finished pruning raspberries and starting on blueberries. Servicing and fixing machinery, putting under cover until spring. Still packing out potatoes, carrots, and squash for wholesale but a couple of cold nights will force us to wrap it up as storage is limited here and the wash area is pretty open and unheated. Getting close to strawberry mulching time, but plants not completely dormant; petioles have flattened but the leaves still green. Busy picking up messes to ready things for the bedding plant season. No weeds, no insects, no fungal pathogens. All this and you don't grab dinner at 9 PM. What is not to like about November?

(Little Compton RI) We lost three greenhouse covers during Sandy. The weatherman got the predicted top wind speeds wrong; we got 75mph gusts not 55mph. Some new lessons learned. One: don't let the second layer of plastic inflate more than 6-8" at its thickest point. Any more air volume doesn't give more insulation and if power is lost in a big wind the extra-loose second layer of plastic will whip around like a garbage bag in a wind storm. With 65 mph sustained winds, even with power, the inflation fan is not going to keep the inflated layer tight. We are now going to yearly evaluate the inflation and if needed, deflate plastic and tighten it up to the 6-8" maximum bubble. Many house covers stretch during hot summers. It is also another reason to cover your house during the warm fall days not when it is cold out. Second: double wiggle wire all downwind sides of greenhouses. If you can afford it, do both of the long sides. Wiggle wire is a great invention but to really have it withstand extreme wind you need two wiggle wires in each hold-down extrusion, opposing one another. This will provide much more even grip on the plastic. An additional factor on two of our lost covers was the age of the plastic. At five years a four year plastic doesn't owe you anything and is more brittle. The third house cover we lost was due to the front door giggling loose and getting ripped off and blown into the woods. Then the wind got inside the house and started to rip it out of the ground. We had to cut that plastic and let it go. Luckily we had sense enough to take down other single layer houses like our Haygrove.

This series of storms has made me realize that in our extreme wind site we are going to need to put a second layer on some single layer houses just so we can make the plastic more secure and more importantly reduce smacking around in the slightest winds. Though it may cost us more, in the long run it will give us the four year life out of the plastic and more importantly give us better long term light quality. If you doubt this take a look at a single layered greenhouse plastic after two years of being smacked around in the wind. You will see thousands of tiny cracks and fissures that limit a significant amount of light from getting through.

(Middle Granville NY) Wrapping things up in the field for bulk harvesting; finished carrots and beets weeks ago, now finishing Jerusalem artichokes and leeks. Brussels crop this year was not good, lots of disease and rot. GH greens seem to be growing well, if not a little too fast. Sweet potatoes are sprouting; it's been hard to get storage temps down cold enough with the warm weather lately. Crew should pretty much be done except weekly harvesting for markets by this weekend, then we move to equipment maintenance and planning for next year.

(Argyle NY) With temps dropping to low 20's we opted to cut all celery and large heads of lettuce, pack and store in the root cellar. We have been very successful storing them this way; celery for 2+ months and lettuce for 4-6 weeks. We continue to harvest smaller heads of field lettuce, selling for \$1 as mini heads, and making into salad mix. Johnny's had a blurb about the new things in their catalog, including Salinova, one-cut lettuces; we had 26 varieties of them in field trials this past summer, and 8 were chosen for sales in the catalog. They are fantastic for salad mix, very consistent, and beautiful colors. We found 6" spacing was best.

We still have leeks, cabbage and Brussels sprouts in the field, but all root crops are finally in the root cellar. The 3 high tunnels are looking lush especially kale, Asian greens, chard, and arugula. The successive Astro arugula plantings are working well; some of the spinach is nearing harvest size, like Giant Winter and Reflect. Transplanting out the last of the spinach where the last tomatoes were recently ripped out; still a few crates of tomatoes for markets. Heavy winds last week loosened some eyebolts on a tunnel which holds the rope on the side, so keep a check on them, to avoid damage to motor, pipes, etc. Preparing for our biggest farmers' markets of the year this Saturday, then a little slower pace and some great conferences.

GROWERS SOUGHT FOR VIDEO ON FARM TRANSFER

UVM Extension is looking for fruit and vegetable farmers in Vermont and nearby states who are willing to share their farm business transition experience with their peers through production of a 5-6 minute video. Participating farms will be paid \$400 for approximately 3-4 hours of their time. The goal is to provide testimonials that will help other farmers understand the issues involved in farm business transfer and transition. Farmers would be agree to speak about actions their farm has taken to move the farm operation to the next generation. If you are interested or know of a farm that would serve as an example, please contact Bob Parsons, UVM Extension, at 802-656-2109, or bob.parsons@uvm.edu. An example of the type of video we want to produce can be seen at: <http://www.uvm.edu/farmtransfer/?Page=videos.html>

HIGH TUNNEL FARMER TO FARMER CONFERENCE

Space is limited for this event on Dec 5-6 at Lake Morey Inn, Fairlee VT. See the agenda, registration and lodging information at: <http://vthightunnelconference.eventbrite.com/#> or go to <http://www.uvm.edu/vtvegandberry/meetings/meetlist.html> for the ever changing list of upcoming events.