



**Vermont Vegetable and Berry News –November 19, 2018**  
compiled by Vern Grubinger, University of Vermont Extension  
(802) 257-7967 ext. 303, [vernon.grubinger@uvm.edu](mailto:vernon.grubinger@uvm.edu)  
[www.uvm.edu/vtvegandberry](http://www.uvm.edu/vtvegandberry)

### **HIGH TUNNEL PRODUCTION CONFERENCE**

Monday, Dec. 3 from 1-6 pm and Tuesday, Dec. 4 from 9 am-4 pm.  
Manchester Downtown Hotel, 700 Elm Street - Manchester, NH

This conference is for high tunnel vegetable growers and agricultural service providers of all experience levels. There will be plenty of opportunities to share expertise and learn from one another. 3.5 PAT credits available on each day. Details and the full program are at: <https://extension.uvm.edu/events/high-tunnel-production-conference>

### **INCREASING EFFICIENCY USING LEAN TECHNIQUES**

Tuesday Dec. 4, 10 am-3 pm at Green Mountain Girls Farm, 923 Loop Rd, Northfield VT 05663

Join Ellen Polishuk, biological farm consultant and teacher, for this focused on farm systems, efficiencies and profitability. Learn more about Ellen at: <http://www.planttoprofit.com>  
Pre-registration encouraged by Nov. 30, as seats are limited. \$25 for NOFA-VT members, \$30 for non-members (lunch included). Questions? [livy@nofavt.org](mailto:livy@nofavt.org), 802-434-4122 ext. 21. More info and registration at <https://nofavt.org/events/increasing-efficiency-using-lean-techniques>

### **VVBGA WINTER MEETINGS**

At Lake Morey Resort in Fairlee: Annual Meeting Jan. 21, Tarping and Mulching conference, Jan. 22. Details coming soon.

### **REPORTS FROM THE FIELD**

(E. Montpelier) This year was fascinating from a potato perspective. Planted 5/22 about 4 days after a previous rain. By 6/25 I only had 50% emergence. By 7/4 I had 80% emergence and plants were stunted at 8 inches. It was also super-hot. I will say it made my applications for leaf hopper so easy since there was no canopy! We finally got rains about 7/15. The potatoes cranked, and despite early killing frost in our microclimate on 9/9, the plants achieved my full yield goal of ~2 lbs. per row ft. The potatoes were super stressed early, but something about the timing allowed them to recover. Wild!

(Starksboro) There was a major change to the local environment this year. My little valley has had field corn from neighboring dairy farms every year for...100 years. This year, the last dairy farm went out of business, and suddenly there was no field corn at all. That made for a lot of raccoon pressure on my little patch of sweet corn. In addition, the local raccoon population has learned over the last 10-15 years that it's worth the little shock from an electric fence to get to the delicious corn on the other side. Another farmer has night vision game cameras showing the raccoons just taking the sting from the fence, and walking right through.

(Westminster West) Wrapped up garlic planting, fields were so wet we couldn't use the transplanter. We went old school and hand-planted 28,000 cloves, wasn't so bad. Now it's all in and covered with 3 layers of heavy remay. Snowed next day. I went back to presoaking the cloves in Oxidate solution and planting with an injection of Rootshield plus. All garlic is on white plastic now, with two rows of drips per bed.

Analyzing the year now and final figures are in with a surprise or two. Lower yields in almost all crops due to the extremely wet fall. That narrowed the margins except for winter squash, which was a surprise as it was hit with hail on top of the rain. Deep subsoiling really helped the crops hold up under the 30" plus of rain since mid-July. The best margin crop turned out to be CBD hemp, by far. You know we'll be increasing that one and decreasing the lowest margin crops.

We have gotten much more efficient with labor, but facing growing costs due to rising wages. Raising prices on the items we sell definitely helped, but there's a limit to that avenue!

(Elmore) Eight inches of snow on Nov. 10 with another eight on Nov. 16 is not what we were expecting. So much more to do! The good thing is that our fruit and nut trees are not falling over with the weight of the snows and it is cold enough so the snow is light and dry. Not sure what causes hundreds of red squirrels to be holed up in every corner of our farm this year, even now. So many apples covered with snow and so many deer pawing the ground needing them.

Burying lots of our tenderest trees in potting mix inside our high tunnel for extra warmth. It worked well last year! Hard to give up having food to eat on trees or from the earth now that it is winter in early November. Last year we were planting into early December. Always good to be ready early, but not always possible.

(Plainfield NH) Winter closed in sooner than we would have liked. This week is traditionally the year's largest sale of root crops, and we are down to the winter skeleton crew as our Jamaicans have migrated home. Strawberries yet to be mulched, and the deer are moving in and working the fields pretty hard due to the spike in squirrel and turkey populations and lack of mast in the woods. Left undone is blueberry pruning, but other than that, we are not in a bad place, as we are propagating ornamentals, cleaning greenhouses, ordering live plant materials and next year's seed.

2018 was not an easy year for any grower I know, and that's moisture related. Our strawberry crop had the tail end cut off due to excessive heat and mugginess, and what happens at the tail end of harvest determines the profitability. We came up short, but the brambles did well and summer vegetables did well.

We were short-handed all season, so a winter project is to create housing for more H2A workers to make up for the lack of local help. Walmart and Price Chopper have signs up for help starting at \$12-\$15 an hour. I think most farmers would be pretty hesitant to hire anyone without farm or manual labor experience at that level of pay. When you add up the Adverse Minimum Wage, housing, DOL contracts, and flights to and from their country of origin, you pretty well pay that and more for H2A labor. We will be giving real thought to labor and mechanization over the winter.

(Little Compton RI) As the year winds down, I take stock in what went well and not so well. Leeks and celeriac were way off par, and cost us market share and reputation. Next year they will both be grown on black plastic, have two drip lines, have 120 lbs./acre of N, and more potassium and calcium. I also want to grow them next to each other so I am giving them both the steady amount of water they deserve. And I will give them a shot of fresh compost. Also hope to arrange placing the leeks in the path of one of our moveable tunnels, so we can harvest leeks well into January.

No more staggered plantings of leeks, or collards, green curly kale, etc. Next year, growing a lot less kales in general! Way too much supply and wholesale market was down 20%. Going to replace it with broccoli and Chinese broccoli. The latter is finally getting some feet under it at farmers' markets and restaurants.

We have discovered a niche of seeding a late fall daikon/storage radish that are harvested at one-third their normal size. Much easier to sell to co-ops and restaurants if they are not 1 lb., 2-foot long roots. KN Bravo, Mini Mak and Shunkyo from JSS are great candidates for this program.

Working with Chris Callahan on a design to manage the surplus soil that gets into washroom floor gutters and plugs up drainage system. A big problem on our farm with our heavy slit loam soils. I spent some time in October with our Interseeder No Till Grain Drill and am very excited to finally see that we are going to have great rye cover appearing under all our late brassica fields going into spring. Thanksgiving markets great as always.

(Argyle NY) Earliest I've seen winter set in in over 20 years. It's been a scramble to get vegetables inside or covered before last Wednesday when it dropped to 18 degrees and then 5" of snow fell by Friday. The past 5 weeks of cloudy cold weather have not been conducive to growing. So we have begun harvesting salad mix and Swiss chard in the tunnel, which usually doesn't happen till close to January. Opposite of last two years with overgrown salad mix because of temps being too warm in the fall. Our storage facilities are filled to the brim with good quality vegetables, and it will just be a fascinating winter with greens production.

We harvested the hundreds of large heads of lettuce last week and will sell them over the next weeks as we have learned they store well in the root cellar for 4-6 weeks after going into cold dormancy. Boston and Romaine varieties don't store as well. We will report on variety storage later.

We planted overwintering onions during the last 2 weeks and opted to steam the soil of the top 2" to see if the weed pressure is eliminated in our 7-foot high low tunnel, 14x100. We also put some onions out under row-cover, some on raised beds with plastic and without plastic. We use Forum sets, red Electric, Bridger, other yellow varieties, and Walla-Walla.

Hoping for a thaw to finish cleaning up the fields but we will see. So happy to be inside for the winter markets that started Nov. 1! Looking forward to all the conferences and travel.

### **TECHNICAL TIPS** from the UVM Extension Ag Engineering Team

Mighty Clean and Comfortable - Check out Lisa MacDougall's new wash/pack shed at Mighty Food Farm in Shaftsbury, VT in this on-line case study: <http://go.uvm.edu/mighty>. This is part of a series of wash/pack case studies that will include videos as well. More to come.

Bins, Buckets, Baskets & Totes - Thinking about harvest and storage totes? Vented, solid. Single color or sortable? Cleanable? See a summary of the key features of totes and sources in this new post: <http://go.uvm.edu/totes>

Hanging Hoses - Having water when and where you need it can make a big difference in vegetable wash station efficiency. Investing in a hose hanger, hose reel, or a trolley can help keep the hose off the ground, resulting in a cleaner and more safe work environment. See some of the options in this new post: <http://go.uvm.edu/hoses>

### **NOFA-VT 2019 JOURNEY FARMER APPLICATIONS DUE DEC. 7**

This two-year program enables new farmers to advance their farming skills and experiences as part of a learning community of beginning farmers and farmer mentors. Journey Farmers receive farmer-to-farmer mentoring, \$500 educational stipend, free admission to NOFA-VT Winter Conference and On-Farm Workshops, business planning support and technical assistance, and access to the Journey Farmer Network. Applications due Dec. 7; interviews will be Dec. 18-19. Questions? Jaime Silverstein, 802-434-4122 x33 or [jaime@nofavt.org](mailto:jaime@nofavt.org) and see <http://nofavt.org/programs/farmer-services/beginning-farmers/journey-farmer>