



Vermont Vegetable and Berry News – November 24, 2014
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REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

(Shelburne/South Burlington) First stretch of colder temperatures so I finally got my row covers out and have the kale/collards/parsley/cilantro covered, but not the spinach. I am continuing to see growth and harvesting a lot out of the two high tunnels. So far I have been pleased with the production from the full sized red Russian kale. I have been harvesting it harder than the green curly, but it has been re-growing rapidly and the profits from it are good. Spinach is looking the best I have ever had at this time, the only issue is some *Cladosporium* so I am scouting for that and removing infected leaves. That seems to be keeping it at bay. I am really thankful I don't live anywhere near Buffalo, NY right about now!

(Plainfield) Happy to have made it through yet another interesting, challenging, and rewarding growing season. As always, I am making a lot of notes to myself about what I want to change about my growing practices. Always a lot to learn, always new things to try, old ones to let go of, and successful practices to continue. Overall the plan is to plant less, fewer crop units, while providing the best soil fertility, weeding, pest and disease control I can muster. I guess I am a market gardener at heart, with a toe into vegetable farming. Looking forward to cleaning up, getting more rest, and having some time to think. Happy Thanksgiving, all.

(Charlotte) We are busy getting our farm ready for next year. There is a lot of pruning going on and getting fields ready for planting next year.

(Westfield) Not 7 feet of snow, but a good 1/2 foot and very cold! Fortunately the sunny days made it possible to pick some greens in the high tunnels for our winter CSA. A few aphids in one greenhouse on the spinach. I am glad I had mulched my strawberries before this cold spell. Next on the list- radiant heat in our tomato greenhouse.

(Salisbury NH) Down to the last few items in field: kale, Brussels sprouts, and row covered lettuce. Sales in beginning of year were slow but ended in a flurry. Dug last of carrots as the ground was getting frozen on top and no warm weather immediately in sight. Still love Sugarsnax. It tends to stay skinny while getting longer. Have tried a number of other varieties but think Sugarsnax is also the sweetest. Vowing next year to keep up with the weeds!

Want to get flame weeder going next year, especially for carrots. Looking forward to rest and ordering seeds for next year. Waiting until spring to plant hoop houses; too hard trying to overwinter when we both still work full time off farm.

(Little Compton RI) Weekend before Thanksgiving sales great even in a crowded indoor farmers' market. Having cauliflower and broccoli really brings them in. Finally Brussels sprouts on the stalk are loosening out to cut and bag. We got \$6 for a 1.2lb bag, \$6 for 2lb bags of Nantes carrots. Having a box of loose ones to stick in their mouths for a taste of the high brix sells them like crazy. We bag spinach, brazing mix, salad mix and kale mix All sell twice as fast as having folks dig it out of open bins with tongs. Just harvested our last carrots. No more overwintering them in the ground; we fed too many voles and not enough CSA members. The trick will be keeping the moisture where it should be. Winter greens in greenhouses are way behind. Glad we hire someone to start plugs each week in Sept. and Oct. as there is too much going on harvesting the public's insatiable desire for more kale. Ripbor was a disaster this summer but better for the fall harvest. I'm glad Green Winterbor will be back in the trade catalogs this winter. We did find some nice Red Russian type kales out of Territorial Seed Co we liked and High Mowing has some new Red Kales we will be getting again. Could use a winter break somewhere.

(Weare NH) Tunnel growth coming along nicely. Only put one layer of row cover on for a few days and now it's off again. Still harvesting lettuce, arugula and kale from the field. Put down clover as a dormant cover crop today and got the garlic straw on. Minor clean up and projects to do. Orders down a bit but most likely due to more limited selection. Getting crop plan done so I can order in next season's supplies. This is one of the best seasons I've had since beginning 5 years ago.

(Elmore) Digging hazelnut bushes to plant out, putting compost over northern exotic trees and vines we planted late this fall, trying to keep warm even though we had 6 inches of snow and it has been about 11 degrees until today. Somehow our greens have not frozen in the high tunnel or the rest of our ginger crop. Tomorrow we plant our last orchard trees and freeze our last apples then it will be time for planting black walnut seed, and pine nut seed and apple seed left over from our cider pressings. For a new year of baby seedlings who all need cold and snow to sprout...

(Plainfield NH) The last week of unseasonably cold weather destroyed the fall Brassicas as everything froze solid. Still we have some carrots in the balance (and in the ground) that I'm hoping the gleaners for Willing Hands (local food shelf/hub) can get to if they are not damaged too badly by the ground freezing. Still packing out onions, carrots and potatoes for wholesale accounts, and the holiday week has spiked sales. Repairs on buildings have been going on at the same time a local guy is building some dedicated office space.

If I knew the amount of paperwork that we would be facing years ago when we began farming, I might have been discouraged enough to look elsewhere for a career. Winter prep in the strawberries has been problematic, because they were nowhere near dormancy prior to this cold snap that abated finally today. As temps neared freezing for the last week, I didn't dare spray for fear of freezing something up. But today I cleaned out the antifreeze out and started spraying, and we hopefully get some mulch on before Thanksgiving. Fall CSA finished last week, everyone sad to see it end, but were picking up their orders in freezing temps. Everyone agrees it's time to be over.

(Grand Isle) 2014 was a fine growing season! The snow can't be too far away so we are down to the wire with cleanup and organization projects. Since we have heavy soils, we have used the last two weeks to make lateral ditches and put down drainage tile and a layer of stone in some of our more productive fields. It is amazing to unearth a layer of ancient sea shells from a bygone era when our farm was part of the ocean. Our pH is good and we never lime our fields due to natural lime stone and shells. Hopefully with our digging we have alleviated standing water problems down the road. Seed catalogues are already arriving in the mail to tempt us with thoughts of the next year!

(Westminster West) I spent today digging about 1,000 ft of drainage ditches to improve my ability to get on the fields early next spring and to help during very rainy conditions. Renting a small excavator is a very cost-effective way to get the job done plus now I know how to run an excavator! We picked out the last of our carrots and turnips on Nov. 20 this year which is the latest we have ever gone on field crops. Thanksgiving orders from our store are very strong and we are much ahead on all produce sales compared to past years. We even held a Pop-Up market last weekend on a busy road and it was a huge success, one which we will try to duplicate, again next year. Coolers are filled with storage crops and hopefully we won't be storing them for long. Still equipment to clean and put away this week and repairs and maintenance on the many greenhouses have started as well. Truckloads of potting soil and related spring equipment arriving this week and next. Already planning for next year at the same time cutting checks for this year's Thanksgiving bonus for the crew.

(Rochester) We always look forward to the fall and early winter to be done with picking berries and get other things done but always seem to run out of time. However, the farm is basically buttoned up for the winter. Hope to lay on the couch and read a little during the holidays.

(Argyle NY) It was a wonderful warm fall with the broccoli coming on early, but generally a great for all crops. The cold spell last week had us racing to harvest the Brussels sprouts and the non-winter leeks, which are both being bagged and stored in the root cellar for early winter sales. All the winter leeks are still in the field with one layer of row cover on them, waiting for the January/February harvest.

Our trial of white plastic, black plastic, and paper mulch on onions, cabbage, leeks and Brussels sprouts was interesting as there were no significant differences in the crops however it was not a cool summer so results may be different with a hotter summer. Onions and cabbage were slightly larger on the white plastic. We will be using the white on black Bio-telo again next year for further trials. We had to harvest spinach and arugula out of the high tunnels last week due to the cold weather but hope to finish off the field crops over the next 2 weeks. All the head lettuce has been harvested and stored in crates in the root cellar for market sales over the next 3-4 weeks. The Forum onion sets, Bridger onion plants, and several trial varieties of onions have all been planted, awaiting a 7-ft. tunnel to go over them this week. One bed of kale and some Salanova lettuces will also get tunnels over them to extend their seasons another month or two. Most of the crops in the winter high tunnels are looking great with the chard and kale quite huge. We are still transplanting the last of the Asian greens and spinach in the tunnels; late but we will see how they do. The garlic is up 2 inches and will get straw mulch over top of them this week. The indoor winter markets have been steadily busy. We look forward to the winter conferences and a slower pace.

HOLD THE DATES

On January 20 and 21 there will be an all-day post-harvest handling of vegetables conference followed by the Vermont Vegetable and Berry Growers Association annual meeting. Both events will be packed with information and take place at Lake Morey Inn, Fairlee VT. The agendas and registration information will be posted in early December.

STILL ROOM IN THE PRACTICAL FOOD SAFETY WORKSHOPS

These workshops, offered at 5 locations around the state over the first half of December are a great way to write or update your food safety plan. Register now, for details see:

<http://www.uvm.edu/~susagctr/whatwedo/producesafety/GAPsResources/PPSregistrationDec2014.pdf>