



**Vermont Vegetable and Berry News** –November 27, 2019  
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## **LAST DAY TO PRE-REGISTER FOR THE NEVFC IS THIS FRIDAY**

The biennial New England Vegetable and Fruit Conference in Manchester NH is coming up on Dec. 10-12. Pre-registration ends on November 29. The fees for any or all 3 days are: \$115 for the first attendee per farm, \$85 for additional attendees, \$50 for students. After November 29 the fees are: \$145 for the first attendee per farm, \$115 for additional attendees, \$70 for students. To view the program and registration info go to: <https://newenglandvfc.org/>

## **REPORTS FROM THE FIELD**

(Burlington) We've never picked sweet peppers into November before, and rarely have we hit single digits so early in November. I guess that is climate volatility for you: no killing frost and then plummeting temps. We are doing our best to ease the transition for our winter tunnel crops by keeping them as cool as we can, but I suspect we'll see more winter injury from poor hardening-off. Time will tell.

Overall production was good with many crops. This year we dedicated one small field with easy irrigation access and lower weed pressure to our baby salad greens, in perpetuity. Though we are foregoing a longer crop rotation, the irrigation and weeding advantages led to significant overall improvements in production this year, and I am excited about the potential to improve even more. We tightened up plant spacing in our tomato houses to 1 double-leader plant every 18" in row instead of 24". While this appears to have been generally favorable, we did see quite a bit more Botrytis damage in the plants, which could have been related, but also could be explained by other factors.

We added more wheels and movable surfaces to our wash/pack operation, and more containers to our harvest logistics. It is really clear that we can do a better job if we fill containers less full and use more of them. Everyone has more energy and fewer injuries; this has been a really good move for us in the past couple of years.

(Guildhall) Sparrow Arc Farm. We finished our first potato harvest, since coming to Vermont in April of this year, on November 5, just ahead of the freeze up. Having started October 9, it was a long harvest to do our 45 acres of spuds, but we had an unusually high number of breakdowns and definitely let some good digging days go by. Quality and yields were generally excellent.

The only quality issue that came up was some hollow heart, but only in our Russet Burbanks. All the other varieties had no issues, even in the "Chefs". Yields ranged widely from 10,000# to the acre on Red Norlands to 38,000 lbs. to the acre on Bel Monda Golds. Our biggest variety by acreage Norwis did well, with a higher percentage of "Chefs" than I've ever grown in Maine or Upstate NY. So far, potato sales have been good.

We also grew 5.5 acres of Winter squash and 1 acre of Jack O'Lanterns, all of which did well. Winter squash yielded 18,500 lbs. to the acre, far more than expected. Dry conditions in September have led to good storing in the squash, despite our less than ideal storage. Squash sales have been slow. Butternut prices in particular too low for my taste. We were offered 18-20 cents a lb. by brokers and decided to sit on it instead.

(Orwell) Winter rushed in quickly this year, but hasn't hindered us too much. We are in the midst of installing a solar array and were still able to get most of the site work done despite the snow, even though it sure looked messy. We are excited to produce our own power.

Winter greens sales are decent, with a big push for the Thanksgiving holiday. We have been surprised that the Salanova survived some pretty cold temperatures; it still looks great and produces so much volume. Still trying to figure out the markets for greens--we have been selling pre-bagged greens, which is definitely a better profit for us, but at some stores move them very slowly. Bulk sells more volume but it's hard to get the price we think we need. In any case, we are glad to work with buyers who communicate well and want us to succeed.

In this season of giving thanks, we have so much gratitude to be farming in a beautiful place, amongst a community of wonderful farmers and friends.

(Grand Isle) We are winding down with the last sales of potatoes and winter squash, as well as planning for the next essential winter projects. We are getting straw mulch in place on garlic and strawberries and hoping the peach trees weather the winter cold.

For any farm that fixes or fabricates equipment, we wish to extoll the virtues of a Plasmacutter machine. It is superior to a torch for working with metal in some instances. It has been a lifesaver for us. Rather than using oxygen and acetylene (both expensive), it uses electricity and compressed air. It is a versatile machine for farm repairs. It makes a nice clean cut with metal; thick or thin. We got our machine from a local (New Hampshire) company, Hypertherm. We are looking forward to the conference in December in Manchester.

(Westminster) We've had one of the best years ever. I'd like to quit farming right now because it will never be this good again, ever. We got the right amount of rain early to get crops started and a long, dry summer with few diseases or insects. We were also better able to manage weeds. So we have a substantial amount of product in storage – about 700 bins of carrots, parsnips, beets, celeriac, turnips and cabbage. A lot of purple daikon, too –anybody want some?

Our markets were relatively strong, and we will be selling some retail through our Winter Market, once Harlow Farmstand closes for the season. I really appreciate our workers, especially our Jamaican colleagues; they're indispensable and allow us to hire a considerable number of local people.

(Westminster West) Each time I think the season is over, I realize there's still more to do. Covered the strawberries today with two layers of mid-weight remay, all plants on raised beds with black plastic and ground cover between the beds. Should be a low labor field with little weeding next spring. Garlic is covered and waiting for snow.

Last deliveries for Thanksgiving done today, sold out almost everything, just as planned. Started potting up lavender cuttings for spring sales, though I feel ambivalent about doing it all over again next year. I guess it's normal to think about the future this time of year.

Sold a big load of dried hemp buds to a broker yesterday and though the price was lower than I hoped, he bought enough so we were happy. Much more in storage to trim and weigh for sale next month. It's been interesting to see the hemp season progress and learn how much labor goes into a successful crop. Started going to winter farmers' market in Brattleboro, and doing well!

Felt especially good handing all our crew a nice bonus just before Thanksgiving. Hope to see many friends at winter meetings, especially the NEVFC in Manchester NH next month!

(Plainfield NH) Winter closing in. The H2A Jamaicans worked up to the last possible day allowed by their allowed contracts...in frozen ground and snow. Got the leeks and other things out in time. Berries mulched, but didn't have time to get the herbicide (Chateau) on before the ground froze. Blueberries remained un-tamed, un-mulched and un-pruned.

Main activities now are greenhouse construction and maintenance, packing out root crops and trying to get our ornamentals cleaned up and ready for vegetative propagation. Annual service of machinery about wrapped up. No question that short days and cold temps reduce outside productivity, with hand-work and machinery, to about 40-50% of normal in more temperate months.

Will start to wrap up the books in the next few weeks to assess just what kind of year we actually had. Then head off and fill up our heads with new and radical ideas for the farm. See you all in Manchester.

(Argyle NY) Outside growing came to a grinding halt November 13 when it hit 6 degrees, though spinach harvesting continued till last Friday. Everything now will be out of the tunnels and storage. The salad mix tunnel is right on time, the spinach tunnel is behind due to late planting, and Swiss chard/ kale tunnel is big and beautiful.

We finished planting overwintered onions and put a tunnel over them. Our 20-foot wide temporary kale tunnel looks great, and our other small tunnel for Salanova is growing, but behind. Had some lettuce drop that was brought under control with Contans.

Farmers' markets are strong and getting better each week, especially at the market that moved to a mall. Nice weather allows us to clean up fields, get straw on garlic, put away irrigation and equipment. We are also preparing for conferences.

## **UPDATES FROM UVM EXTENSION AG ENGINEERING**

GREENS SPINNERS - Three new guides related to washing machine green spinner conversions are available on the blog: <http://go.uvm.edu/ageng>

1. Shopping Tips: <http://go.uvm.edu/shoppingtips> is a guide that provides general shopping advice when purchasing a washing machine for conversion to a greens spinner.

2. Conversion SOP for a Speed Queen TC5000WN see: <http://go.uvm.edu/tc5pdf>

3. Conversion SOP for a Whirlpool WTW500DW see: <http://go.uvm.edu/wtw5pdf>

There is also an earlier general guide to greens spinners that includes a wider range of options including everything from manually cranked options to super fancy purpose-built machines: <http://go.uvm.edu/greensspinners>

We have had two great washing machine green spinner conversion workshops. If you are interested in a future workshop like this, send us a note at [ageng@uvm.edu](mailto:ageng@uvm.edu). We do plan to publish a general conversion guide for many of the older model washing machines. If you have specific questions, send us an email.

## **BREAKING DOWN THE PRODUCE SAFETY RULE: BIOLOGICAL SOIL AMENDMENTS OF ANIMAL ORIGIN**

Dominique Giroux, Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets

Manure and compost can be valuable assets to many farms to keep soils healthy. Farms use a variety of methods to incorporate these amendments as well as different techniques for storing, applying, and composting. While soil amendments are important for maintaining on-farm fertility, it's important to keep in mind potential produce safety risks when handling and applying amendments. The Vermont Produce Program has an article detailing FSMA Produce Safety Rule requirements and recommended best practices as they pertain to Biological Soil Amendments of Animal Origin. You can read the article here: [agriculture.vermont.gov/bsaao](http://agriculture.vermont.gov/bsaao)

## **PAYMENT FOR ECOSYSTEM SERVICES: SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS**

Payment for ecosystems services (PES) is a hot topic in Vermont. It is important that policymakers hear from farmers before a system is put in place, so a survey has been put together to gather your input, which will be shared as public comment with the PES Working Group,

convened by the legislature in 2019. It is critical that the stakeholders who may be affected most directly by a PES system have the opportunity to participate in its development. If you are a farmer or land manager, please take 20 minutes to answer our 8 questions as thoughtfully as you can before the deadline of December 1. Questions? Contact Maddie Kempner at (802) 434-4122 ext. 32 or [maddie@nofavt.org](mailto:maddie@nofavt.org)

### **PRODUCE SAFETY ALLIANCE (PSA) TRAINING**

Monday, Dec. 9, 2019, 8 am-5 pm, Doubletree Hotel, 700 Elm St, Manchester, NH  
(One day before the New England Veg and Fruit Conference, at the same venue.)

This training is for fruit and vegetable growers and others interested in learning about produce safety, the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) Produce Safety Rule, Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs), and co-management of natural resources and food safety. This training satisfies the FSMA Produce Safety Rule requirement for covered farms that "at least one supervisor or responsible party" completes "food safety training...recognized as adequate" by FDA. Fee of \$20 includes meals, course materials and certificate. To register, [click here](#). For more information, to request a disability-related accommodation, or to note any dietary restrictions. Email [virginia.jaquish@uvm.edu](mailto:virginia.jaquish@uvm.edu), or call (802) 751-8307 x351.

### **TRI-STATE GREENHOUSE IPM WORKSHOPS**

January 7, 2020 Manchester, ME  
January 8, 2020 Durham, NH  
January 9, 2020 Burlington, VT

The Tri-state Greenhouse IPM Program is a collaboration among growers and specialists from ME, NH and VT. This year's workshop features Brian Spencer, Biocontrol Specialist from Applied Bio-nomics, Victoria BC Canada. His company produces FRESH natural enemies, to maximize their effectiveness. He will talk about new beneficials that are commercially available and how to use them. Other topics include: info on biology, quality control and use of biocontrols; calculating amount of light your crop needs, how a top plant producer uses IPM on a large scale, how to refine your pathogen testing methods, sprayer calibration strategies, and Hands-On exercises. Questions? Cheryl Frank Sullivan 802-656-5434 or [cfrank@uvm.edu](mailto:cfrank@uvm.edu).

More info and registration at:

<https://www.uvm.edu/~entlab/Greenhouse%20IPM/Workshops/2020/IPMWorkshop2020Announcement.pdf>

### **VVBGA ANNUAL MEETING IS ON JANUARY 27: HOLD THE DATE**

A day-long educational program featuring a variety of (mostly farmer) speakers is in the works! The meeting will again be at the Lake Morey Resort in Fairlee, VT, with a lunch featuring local food. There is still room for commercial members to reserve an exhibit table and/or to advertise in the annual meeting booklet. Dues start at just \$75, which includes an ad in the booklet, see: [http://www.uvm.edu/vtvegandberry/VV&BGA/2020\\_Commercial\\_Membership\\_Fillable.pdf](http://www.uvm.edu/vtvegandberry/VV&BGA/2020_Commercial_Membership_Fillable.pdf)