



**Vermont Vegetable and Berry News – November 5, 2024**  
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## **REPORTS FROM THE FIELD**

(Westminster) A really nice fall has led to an excellent harvest season, although we still have five or six acres of carrots and beets to harvest and more radishes and turnips than we can possibly sell. The limiting factor is bins: we've almost filled the 220 bins we bought this fall to supplement what we had.

We're still cutting lettuce and will be for two or three weeks, weather permitting. We'll have kale until Thanksgiving, if not beyond. Winter squash is selling briskly, except for baby blue hubbard and orange kabocha, which Whole Foods decided to stop selling. Anyone who needs those varieties of squash, let us (Harlow Farm) know.

With the robust harvest, we're a little worried about enough people to work on our wash-pack line this winter once the Jamaican H2A workers are gone; local labor is still almost nonexistent.

It won't make up for all of last year's losses but helps quite a bit. So I might think about doing it again next year. It's my 55th year of doing a tax return but I can't retire quite yet. Even though Jake Guest said I should have retired five years ago.

(Hinesburg) Finished garlic planting Oct 31. We've been gradually pushing the planting back by a few days each year. Field greens still looking great. Hoophouse greens are ready too. Demand for greens is light. Probably everyone has a good supply? Winter cutworms are vigorous. Hoop house carrot tops seem like their favorite right now. Seduce and B.t. helped, applied it in spinach.

With the warm weather, we are leaving the farmstand open, until sales die off, or it gets too cold in the unheated building. Fall CSA starts this week. Signups were steady.

Working on a garden drainage project, a French drain with perforated pipe and stone. There's never been a time that seemed like a good time for tearing up the garden. Firm dry ground at the end of October is the time! Other than the July monsoon season, it was a smooth year.

(Plainfield NH) Much needed rain came in the night. We need a great deal more before the ground freezes. Still some fall crops to bring in and garlic yet to plant. A beautiful long frost-free fall let us pick corn up to the October 20, and we picked our last fall raspberries last Saturday.

Fall clean up underway in the fields. Servicing machinery and putting it away for winter. Mulching blueberries got underway yesterday, and it's been a long while since we did this activity. We are battling invasives in the blueberries: buckthorn, bittersweet, wild grapevine and the odd hardwoods as well. A couple of us could likely make a career out of pruning and caring for the blueberries, but it's all about labor management...or should I say the management of not having enough labor available when you need it?

Fall CSA is underway until Thanksgiving, and wholesale remains strong. Lots of a carrots in the cooler, a short crop of onions and adequate crop of potatoes except for russets which seemed to languish this year. Their emergence seemed to be retarded with lots of skips and weeds resulting, not sure why as we didn't see this in the golds, reds or whites.

Going over soil testing results...looks like overall we are low in Mg, K and Ca in the majority of our soils, and OM levels on some fields came back disappointingly low, despite amendments of cover crops, compost. Farming on sandy loams is a double-edged sword.

(Little Compton RI) This is our seventh year using a high-clearance no-till interseeder on four acres of mixed fall brassica crops. The planter puts two lines of cover crops in the tire tracks and three lines of cover crops in-between the cash crop rows that are 34" apart. This year the plantings got two good rains to lock in the 3-week old broccoli, etc. and though we have not had a drop of rain in 38 days the crop is looking incredible. The winter rye is substantial, and the crop/heads are healthy and show no signs of lacking water. Like a dense planting of sweet corn, the rye plus cole crops create their own microclimate that preserves moisture and captures fall morning dews remarkably well.

We grew about 1000 heads of JSS Fioretto 70 and are very impressed! The heads are so spectacular looking that we are getting \$7 to \$8 a head at farmers' markets and at our store we are cutting them up and packing them in strawberry quarts and getting \$5 each.

The battles we lost mid-summer to Alternaria in brassicas now seemed to be under control with Kocide 3000 and OSO. We followed some advice from an Italian breeder of Radicchio and didn't give our fall planting any fertilizer till two weeks after transplanting, and they seem to be doing well but for a touch of powdery mildew.

This weekend is the first covered indoor farmers' market. With Brussel Sprouts and Fioretto 70 cauliflower it should be a good one for us.

(Argyle NY) It's been a wonderful October with warm temperatures to continue growth of produce, with a few nights of protection. We have cherry tomatoes, peppers, and eggplants producing in the tunnels with only limited night heat when below 30 F. Also have dahlias and zinnias doing well in low Farmer Friend tunnel and we are trialing to leave the dahlias in the ground all winter in the tunnel and will monitor the soil temperature with alarm settings. We are even eating cantaloupe from inside a tunnel that tastes good. Outside leeks are without damage from allium leaf miner due to the netting that has been on since August.

Been the driest on record for us, so irrigating a lot. Still using the pond system but drained the lines a few cold nights.

Winter greens look good in the tunnels. Kale is ready to harvest and been harvesting spinach for 3 weeks. Arugula trial is underway with first harvest of 5 varieties last week. All 5 have bacterial speck on the cotyledons but true leaves are fine.

Steamed greens beds with our new steamer that is SO fast. It takes 20 minutes to get soil to 160 degrees, so can do a whole tunnel with eight 34-inch beds in 3 hours. We look forward to no weeding this winter and maybe healthier soil.

We planted transplanted a mix of salinova and regular salad mix varieties for the winter (Albabionda, Sulu, and a lot of trials) and mini heads (Cherokee and trials) that we hope to have into January. Forum onion sets and transplanted yellow onions (Hi-Keeper) are being planted now in succession as we get beds cleared out in unheated tunnels.

Was a busy year with farm projects like painting all the buildings, which are mostly done, and organizing/cleanup always on the docket. Still trying to find another winter worker if any are leaving other farms (farm.pvf@gmail.com). On final details of the organizing of the New England Vegetable and Fruit Conference. Registration is open! Excited to see farmers at winter conferences!

## **NATURAL RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICTS**

NRCDs are non-regulatory entities that work at the local level with private landowners, farms, state and federal agencies, and other partner organizations to promote and implement conservation programs. Vermont has 14 NRCDs that act as local facilitators linking landowners and producers with the appropriate federal, state, local, and private programs. Some districts are holding their meetings this month: Caledonia County, Nov. 7 from 5:30-7:00 and Windham County Nov. 14 from 5:00-7:00. The annual statewide meeting is on Nov. 19-20 at Lake Morey Resort. For more info go to <https://www.vacd.org/conservation-districts/>

## **INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN NRCS COMMITTEES**

Every state has a Natural Resources Conservation Service technical committee, and subcommittees. These serve in an advisory capacity to NRCS, providing input on policies and funding priorities. Committees include members from a wide variety of natural resource and agricultural interests. In Vermont there are currently subcommittees for the following priorities: Soils, Water Quality, Climate, Forest and Wildlife, Urban and Small Agriculture, Wetland Reserve Easements, and Working Lands (EQIP/CSP). [Click here](#) for a summary of the subcommittees, their meeting dates, and person to contact. Many of the meetings are hybrid so you can attend without traveling.

## **ORGANIC MENTORSHIPS AVAILABLE**

Sign ups are open now to be paired with an experienced organic mentor for a yearlong peer-to-peer organic mentorship. Through the [Transition to Organic Partnership Program](#), certified producers serve as mentors for organic-curious and transitioning producers. Receive one-on-one support, set your own goals, visit each other's operations, ask your burning questions, and be set up for success in your organic certification journey! It's open to any type of producer--veg, berry, other crops (hay, grain), flowers, maple, livestock, dairy, processors, handlers, etc. [See more info here](#), read stories from 2024, and fill out the short form soon to start the mentorship in December or early 2025.

From a mentee: *“The mentorship program was absolutely vital to our success with our certification. My mentor was consistent, proactive, kind, supportive, and positive and he seriously helped to calm my anxiety about the inspection!”*

## **NEW ENGLAND VEGETABLE AND FRUIT CONFERENCE AND TRADE SHOW**

Manchester NH, December 17-19

The biennial NEVFC will be held at the Doubletree by Hilton Manchester Downtown. The event features 30 educational sessions over three days, on topics related to vegetable, berry, and tree fruit crops. Visit <https://newenglandvfc.org/> for registration and accommodation details. Early bird registration discount ends Nov 30.

## **VVBGA ANNUAL MEETING**

**Hold the date! January 28, 2025.** DoubleTree Hotel, S. Burlington. Please encourage companies and organizations you do business with to join the VVBGA as commercial members at <https://vvbga.org/commercial-membership> so they get an ad in the meeting booklet, and can sign up for a table in our trade show. Registration for the meeting will open next month.