



## Vermont Vegetable and Berry News – November 9, 2010

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### REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

(Argyle NY) After a cold October, some of the fall root crops are not quite ready yet (cabbage, cauliflower, etc) so these warmer days will hopefully push them along. The broccoli is coming in nicely, as well as the Brussels sprouts. We are ordering more of the Proteknet from Dubois Agrinovation (<http://www.duboisag.com>) soon to get custom sizes as we loved it for cabbage moth and flea beetle exclusion from crops rather than spraying all year. All potatoes are harvested and in the root cellar, hoping to get carrots done today, then onto the many other crops still out there, with many being under rowcover. The 2 high tunnels (30x144) are both finally all planted and seeded, with the growth of spinach, salad mixes, kale, swiss chard, and Asian greens seemingly on schedule. We have planted trials of about 10 types of spinach in the tunnels, which I'll take photos of all winter and try to keep some records on for production, color, etc. Bridger onions are being trialed in the tunnels (seeded August 15th in our greenhouse) as well as the Forum onion sets that we'll get from Johnny's and plant in January. We have not started row-covering the tunnels yet to aid in lots of light to the greens and the automatic venting is set at 60 degrees with an upper end vent open at all times to control humidity. Saturday markets were a little slower, but should pick up as we approach Thanksgiving.

(East Montpelier) Well the change over from summer growing to winter growing is finishing up. One of these days I will have the time to get temporary tunnels up just to get extra salad and spinach for the holiday markets. Just too much to do this time of year and not enough of me to get it all done. Trying a single large piece of #19 row cover at 30x100 feet in one greenhouse to see if it keeps things warmer by covering the pathways as well. The other greenhouse has 5 pieces of row cover, one for each 4x90 bed. Chickens are in winter quarters. My new mobile chicken coop works like a charm. Moved 300 layers in about one hour and connected the trailer to my small greenhouse. Some improvements needed but the easiest move I have ever done. Nesting boxes are all set with a back door for collecting eggs. Greenhouses are looking great, spinach got planted a bit late but is catching up; hopefully in time for holiday markets. Wholesale accounts are still getting turned away. Too much demand at market doing direct retail and I need one or two more greenhouses to increase winter production. Senposai (a new green from Fedco) and kale looking great under remay for Christmas market. Late radishes and salad turnips doing well also. Lots of small grasshoppers in the greenhouses hanging on and causing some damage. Voles continue to be an issue but not as bad as last year. Leeks and Olympia onions still out in the field and will not get harvested for 3 more weeks. Deer decided to see what some of them tasted like. Fava beans under one layer of remay with hay mulch to see if they will produce in early spring. Arugala and Mache doing well also. Should be a good winter season. Soup business (value added product) remains very strong and justifies not selling produce at all. Have to think about that one.

(Royalton) Garlic is in the ground, but we're considering planting some more if the weather holds. Hoophouses both planted to lettuce, kale, spinach, bok choy, cilantro (under two layers of remay), radishes, carrots. The dill and the cilantro in the field were hit hard enough to make them unprofitable to pick through for market, but still enough there for home consumption.

Asparagus trimmed, mulched and side-dressed with compost. Sheep and cows are cleaning up the tomatoes to avoid volunteer weeds next year. Chard, beets and celery are still looking good, with bright leaves and stems.

(Salisbury NH) This is our first winter with the unheated hoop house. We planted things last year in early spring but didn't go through a winter. We started a lot of things late September (according to Eliot Coleman's chart we should have planted more in August) but figured it's all part of the grand experiment. Tyee spinach, rover radish, Allstar lettuce mix, Wildfire lettuce mix, Spectrums greens, tatsoi, bulls blood beets, Napoli carrots. Everything is up and growing but slowly. Want to get a min/max thermometer to see what temps are doing. Today was sunny but cold outside (about 40 degrees) but the hoop house felt like 65 degrees. Want to take soil temps too. Haven't put any row covers down yet. Trying to decide how to suspend them--strings running the length of the raised beds or internal hoops. We've had quite a problem with some as yet unidentified caterpillars that chewed the heck out of some leaves. Sprayed some Bt which helped. Transplanted some lettuce that we had still growing outside; looks nice to see instant color. Also transplanted some smaller broccoli plants we had outside that probably wouldn't produce. We do have some button sized heads starting so this might have worked. Tried planting scallion seeds at the same time as the lettuces; nothing seemed to germinate. Maybe need to start in plug trays and transfer outside.

(Granville NY) Going into winter this year with 2 hoophouses (one kale one spinach), 2 high tunnels both mixed greens, and our new Haygrove super solo. Haygrove was planted first as we'll be taking the plastic off by christmas (or first big snow) Greens growing great in there- maybe a little too fast. Late houses growing a little slow due to colder than normal October, so are later field greens, field spinach is yellowing even with late nitrogen applications. We're going to overwinter some onions and Napoli carrots in mini tunnels. Onions will be for the spring; carrots we'll harvest during the winter. Fall field lettuce looking good, maybe a little small, we try to keep it on our shale loam to prevent leaching in the late fall.

(Bath MI) Even though it is a little late, as of yesterday the spinach, chard, and kale in the field are covered with quick hoops. We are trying these for the first time this year and are excited to see how they work. We are hoping to hold off harvesting these three crops from the hoophouse a little bit longer so we can have them later into the Winter/early Spring. We sold out of these by early January last year and are trying to keep that from happening again. We have been harvesting other crops out of the hoophouse for the past two weeks including carrots, salad mix, red and golden beets, and baby spinach for the first year of our winter farmers market. We have two empty beds right now where the carrots have come out and should have another 2 from more carrots, 1 from the beets, 1 from head lettuce, and 1 from 'hakurei' and 'scarlet queen' turnips by the middle or end of December. We are going to try and seed those beds to spinach in late December, see if they will germinate, and then let them take off come February 1st. We have seen a small amount of Cercospora on the beets and are keeping an eye on the spinach to make sure it doesn't show up there. There's a small amount of leaf miner damage on the chard. We have been picking off those leaves as we see them and getting them out of the tunnel. We are also battling a small war with some shrews, have been setting 6 traps a night, and are catching a few each time. No damage on the crops from them but burrowing all around. We had a 26 x 48 ft Rolling Thunder movable tunnel delivered 2 weeks ago but are thankfully waiting until the Spring to put it up.

(Starksboro) Although it's been very wet, it's been a fairly mild fall so far, so we are still getting greens out of the field. Our new high tunnel is full of very nice baby spinach, which is now in a holding pattern because the day length is so short. I expect to start using that baby spinach from Thanksgiving through New Years in our CSA and Farmers markets. Of course we have tons of roots in storage as well, but the high tunnel greens are the real excitement.

(Little Compton RI) As we get more experience with 'winter growing' it seems like late October has all the intensity and pressure of mid May; add to that the extra duties of still trying to find time to get the late potatoes and carrots out of the ground and properly stored. We tried some new Seedway storage cabbages. I thought we got them seeded and planted out into the field with plenty of time to spare; we transplanted them July 16th. As of last week, the damn things are still the size of softballs. I was hoping by now they would be the size of my head. I have heard another grower complaining about the same varieties behaving in a similar way. Were they stunted by the drought and lack of water? Who knows! Winter markets started last week. Lots of new faces which is good. We had a large display but were lacking things that the drought of "summer 2010" just wouldn't let us do well with; namely leeks, Brussels sprouts. One of my new takeaways: in winter growing it is keeping the soil warm that is almost as important as keeping the tops from freezing. It seems that the low tunnels work best is you have a wide area covered and try to keep the hoop edges as close together as possible. I saw an excellent talk by a grower in CT that does an acre and a half under hoops and he thinks this way as well. He doesn't use floating row cover as his first cover but uses perforated clear plastic. And then keeps another layer of clear plastic at the ready on the downwind side of the hoops. All the low tunnels in his 1 and half acres are only 40 ft. long! So he can micro-manage planting dates and harvest times. He also has a theory that makes an argument for plantings peas, carrots, fava beans and more just after Xmas for spring harvest. We will be trying to get this person to speak at the N.E. Veg and Fruit Confer in 2012.

(Westminster West) We just finished picking the last of our tunnel raspberries on Nov. 6th, still sweet and huge berries. Garlic all in and well rooted, had some problems with crows pulling up cloves! Finishing up our NRCS tunnel this week and then doing regular maintenance on the other houses. Squash and onion sales doing well Thur wholesale channels, closed our retail a few days ago. Looking forward to a nice vacation before we start it up all over again!

## **NRCS MAKES HIGH TUNNEL PROGRAM MORE FLEXIBLE**

The Interim Conservation Practice Standard (798) 'Seasonal High Tunnels System for Crops' was piloted in 2010 to offer a technology to extend the growing season in many areas of the United States to successfully produce vegetable and other specialty crops. The interim standard has been used for about 9 months now. Many producers have requested to add fans, heaters, and roll-up sides as features that would improve function and efficiency. As a result, the Interim Conservation Practice Standard (798) has been revised to relax the restrictions on electrical, heating, and mechanical ventilation systems. This revision is applicable to previous facilities planned and installed. The new practice definition for (798) reads: "A seasonal polyethylene-covered structure that is used to cover crops to extend the growing season in an environmentally safe manner." This will provide the opportunity for those producers who want to add the additional electrical, heaters, double layer poly greenhouse covering, and ventilation systems to do so at their own expense.

The criteria for the interim standard remain unchanged. If the addition of electrical or mechanical equipment adds to the structural requirements of the structure, it is up to the producer to fund the higher-cost structure. The seasonal high tunnel system must still be a manufactured kit, as stated in the criteria.

High Tunnels are offered in the Agricultural Management Assistance Program and the Environmental Quality Incentives Program for fiscal year 2011. The deadline to apply for the second round of EQIP and the initial round of AMA is January 14, 2011. For more information contact your local NRCS office or go to: <http://www.vt.nrcs.usda.gov/>

## **GARLIC NEMATODE UPDATE**

Garlic bloat nematode, also called stem and bulb nematode (*Ditylenchus dipsaci*), is a 'new' pest problem in the Northeast, or at least it is just being documented. Dr. George Abawi at Cornell University tells me he has run over 100 garlic samples from NY and to date has confirmed the occurrence of the nematode in samples submitted from 15 counties. Recently I sent samples from 9 different farms in VT to the nematology lab at the University of Arkansas run by Dr. Terry Kilpatrick, and he found nematodes in samples from 3 of the locations, representing north, central and southern VT. So this is clearly a pest to keep an eye out for. Symptoms include distorted leaves and spongy, decay at the base of bulbs. For more information on this pest see:

<http://blogs.cce.cornell.edu/cvp/files/2010/09/Managing-bloat-nematode-in-Garlic-FINAL.pdf>

Crop rotation and use of clean seed stock are key to managing this nematode. It is still not clear if bulb treatments make sense. Symptoms of infection and procedures for hot water treatment of bulbs are described at: <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/crops/hort/news/hortmatt/2010/21hrt10a2.htm>. Dr. Abawi recommends hot water treatment for commercial plantings ONLY when there is no other alternative. This treatment was initially developed to rescue/save valuable breeding germplasm of garlic and other plants, and to start tissue culture work with clean stock. It is critical to control the temperature well and be aware that the viability of treated garlic may be reduced and the effect will vary with varieties, growing conditions, etc. It is unclear at this time whether bleach, hydrogen peroxide or other treatments will help suppress nematodes; hopefully research this winter by Dr. Abawi will shed some light on this.

**UPCOMING EVENTS** See <http://www.uvm.edu/vtvegandberry/meetings/meetlist.html>

Lots of workshops and conferences are being added to the on-line meeting list...check it out so you can mark your calendars.