



Vermont Vegetable and Berry News – February 1, 2021
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REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

(Westminster West) Here we go again! First trays of seeded strawberries are up and many herb trays seeded on the heated propagation benches. Increasing production a little bit over last year as we do get maxed out labor-wise. All the crew is returning including the delivery driver, so very grateful for our good fortune.

Just ordered some new potato equipment from Poland, seem like good value for the money and there's a dealer network here for parts which is always important. Some other upgrades underway as well as winter repairs keeping me busy. No winter vacation this year, stay at home and stay busy is fine, doing more innovative cooking now, I should try making bread! Still unsure how the farmers market will function this year. We didn't attend last year because of Covid concerns and not sure what it will be like this spring and summer, so hard to make plans. Good snow cover here, so hoping garlic is happy and already anxious to see them emerge!

(Jericho) This has been our busiest January ever, setting records for winter roots and greens sold per week, with the last week of January bringing us an all-time record for the farm. We are happy to "make hay while the sun shines" but missing our winter hibernation period. At least the skiing is good! The mild fall resulted in bounteous winter greens, and we are still harvesting fresh greens every week for our CSA and farmstand.

After several winter growing seasons experimenting with different planting dates and being foiled by Mother Nature with warm sunny falls followed by cold cloudy falls, we have given up trying to get it just right and decided earlier planting is just better, even if the greens do get too big too fast in the fall. It's more profitable to cut them earlier and overlap a mild extended field season than to not have them size up at all, and often if they size up too much we can sell them as a different/bigger-leafed product and make it work that way.

First tomatoes are seeded and up, ready for grafting in a couple weeks. Started the tomatoes this year in the very first cooler we built for the farm, which is basically just a well-insulated room, and given its small size and tightness we're finding the grow lights themselves give enough heat to keep it warm all day, just needs a small space heater at night when lights are off. Enjoying the bright sun and lengthening days and looking forward to a rocking 2021!

(Newbury) We just this week harvested the last of our beet greens from under the snow. Still digging beets, starting alliums, celery and celeriac this week.

(Alburgh) Still pretty quiet time of year with no greenhouse going yet. One note of interest: Tetsukabuto squash from JSS is still in perfect condition in storage. This is an interspecific hybrid between c. Maxima and c. Moschata with huge yield (30,000 to 40,000 lbs/acre), high brix, and excellent eating quality. But the big thing is storage! The last 200 cartons we packed had just one bad squash. I'm thinking it will last well into April. And customers love it.

(Elmore) Out winter tunnels are holding up well and our peach trees inside look good as do our remaining greens and cuttings beds and seedling beds. It has been a difficult winter of store buyers not getting back to us to reorder our black walnuts, jam or frozen blueberries, which is surprising and frustrating. We have the products people want but it is sometimes hard to get the food to the people. We have tried front porch forum and selling directly to customers this winter and this has had some success.

Some changes planned for the current growing season are: have crew lined up well in advance of needs, focus on what we can do well and do more of it, and less of what we are struggling with. Consolidate our operations to have one area for customers to interact with and the rest of the farm just for crew to be working and growing what we then bring down for pickup and shipping out.

Very grateful for a crew that works hard and is kind to each other. especially during corona time. the camaraderie and the patience and the dedication of a devoted crew goes a long, long way.

(Plainfield NH) Dead of winter on the river, with very little that demands everyday attention. Back-ordered hard goods still trickling in, seeds orders are getting checked in, plowing snow, and fixing electrical outlets. We have no winter tunnels with vegetables, but the ornamental house is chuggin' along with stock plants and vegetative cuttings. Some herbs and ornamentals to be started in the next 10 days. Along with this year's planning is the question that is looming over many of us: Can we expect the same demand and sales as last year? It currently appears that a good portion of this year will be behind masks. We are going ahead both in the ornamentals and vegetable plans, CSA caps, and labor force recruitment the same as last year.

(Little Compton RI) With Covid so out of control in October we backed off and only planted half of our greenhouse to winter greens. We have enough weekly production for our one Saturday farmers market, but none to wholesale. Been nice having more time to do much needed maintenance that has fallen to the wayside with the full court press of past winter greens production. We are increasing acreage for the summer; especially fall broccoli, kale and Brussels sprouts. Also, increasing beets and fall carrot production.

Got our fields planted in all manner of overwintering covers. Especially grateful for our Interseeder, high clearance no-till grain drill. Not only did it allow us to put wonderful diverse covers in the understory below our fall broccoli, cauliflower, collards, etc., but it also made seeding down fall harvested crops like potatoes with a timely cover crop easier than our normal number of days with subsequent trips with Perfectas and finishing harrows. The no-till grain drill aspect has given us a two- to four-week jump over prior year's seeding dates. At first glance this doesn't seem like much but the growth that occurs with early seeding leads to dramatic increase in cover crops biomass.

For those of you receiving sticker shock at the \$16K cost of the Interseeder, please check out the YouTube video below of a Minnesota silage farmer who built his own for around \$3K. Not a replacement for the Interseeder but valuable info if you are considering interseeding crops in the future. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5ba4BGLsaqw>

VVBGA ANNUAL MEETING PRESENTATIONS NOW POSTED

[Click on links](#) in the meeting agenda to view presenter's slides. Check out the videos by commercial members; follow the link to the [VVBGA YouTube channel](#). Stay tuned for the audio recording of the meeting, posted soon.

SEASONALLY-RELEVANT RESOURCES FROM UVM AG ENGINEERING

SHEDDING LIGHT IN THE SHED - It is a great time of year to think about adding some lighting to work areas. We cover how much light to consider and various options.

<http://go.uvm.edu/lighting>

GERM AND GROWTH CHAMBERS - If you're thinking about building or revitalizing a germination or growth chamber, take a look at our guide and collection of examples.

<http://go.uvm.edu/growthchambers>

BETTER TUNNEL VENTILATION - Have you had issues with molds and mildews in your tunnels? Consider some ways to increase ventilation. <http://go.uvm.edu/tunnelventilation>

MONITORING AND ALARMS - Tired of worrying about whether the start house heater is actually running at night? We've got a list of remote monitoring options that work on everything from a hard-wired circuit to cellular data plans. <http://go.uvm.edu/monitoring>

GROWER SURVEY RELATED TO CLEANING AND SANITIZING

Struggling with cleaning and sanitizing practices? You're not alone.

You asked, we listened, and now we have a few follow-up questions. Partners at the University of Vermont, Cornell University, USDA, and National Farmers Union Foundation are working to develop a new training program to help small and medium-scale farmers take their businesses to the next level of safe and efficient vegetable handling systems. Do you have a few minutes to [complete a short survey](#) to help us? The voice of farmers is invaluable to the process. To learn more about the project visit <http://go.uvm.edu/scrub>

EASTERN NY FRUIT AND VEG CONFERENCE

The CCE Eastern NY Commercial Horticulture team invites vegetable and berry growers to our virtual series of production, food safety, and business management webinars. [Register for individual sessions or save money with a "bundle" option](#). We hope you will join us!

Feb 1, 12-2 pm: Developing an Onboarding Plan for Seasonal Workers
Feb 5, 12-2:30 pm: Show Me the Money (Funding Opportunities)
Feb 9, 10-11 am: Food Safety Best Practices for Pick-Your-Own Fruit Farms
Feb 11, 9-10:30 am: Virtual Farm Stand Tours
Feb 16, 10 am-12 pm: Listeria in the Apple Packing Environment
Feb 17, 9:45-11:45 am: Sweet Potato Webinar
Feb 19, 12:45-2:15 pm: Vegetable Transplant Troubleshooter
Feb 23, 7:45-9:30 am: Strawberry Pest Management Workshop
Feb 24, 7:45-9:30 am: Raspberry/Blackberry Production Workshop
Feb 25, 7:45-9:30 am: Managing Blueberry Pests
Feb 26, 12:30-2:30 pm: Sweet Corn Webinar

NEW WEB SITES - REMINDER

The UVM Extension web site www.uvm.edu/vtvegandberry is kaput, replaced by <https://www.uvm.edu/extension/horticulture/commercial>

The VVBGA has its own web site now, www.vvbga.org It is where you go [to join or renew your membership](#), and if you want, to create produce safety and soil health plans.