



Vermont Vegetable and Berry News – March 1, 2023

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<https://www.uvm.edu/extension/horticulture/commercial>

REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

(Guildhall) The weekly grind of paperwork and moving potatoes all over New England continues. The taxes are done, crop plan and seed orders are done. All that remains is some equipment repair, debt service, and selling the last 500k of potatoes. We had a high incidence of hollow heart in gold chefs in most of our fields this year. To try to correct for this I've finally hired an agronomist to help balance our soils, and do weekly tissue sampling in season; I'm pretty stoked on it. Our 2023 crop plan has got us increasing the number of varieties we grow again, after trimming that number the last several years.

(Westminster West) No supply issues so far. Soil mix, compost, pots, trays and seed have arrived in a timely manner. Shipping costs are up! Storage potatoes holding up fine as is garlic, but almost out.

Soil test from tunnels sent off, thanks for the reminders! For some strange reason, we are expanding vegetable production this year in some areas, potatoes, winter squash, celery and garlic. Labor is the big driver for changes as well as margins and demand. Overall crop expenses were up last year and controlling costs will be my biggest problem this year and may need to hold off capital expenditures such as well drilling and new equipment, do I really need a new tractor? Tomatoes and early seedlings are up and running already in the propagation house and I'm actually excited by this year's prospects, onward!

(Saratoga Springs NY) Lack of, or minimal, snow cover has made it very difficult to keep deer out of strawberries. Exacerbated by poor mast last year, leaves little alternative and heavy pressure for what is available, namely strawberry plants. Double electric fence does not stop hungry deer. Temps in the 50's in February led to bud swelling on blueberry plants, followed by minus 20. Remains to be seen if damage results.

(Ange-Gardien, Quebec) It has been a very mild winter in here: all the crop overwintered fine, no tip burn due to frost on spinach. It also has been a very snowy winter too! Lots of shoveling especially on the gutter-connected greenhouses!

Market is stabilising after a big drop in 2022. Prices went up, so is the price of ALL the inputs. No problem getting everything I need for this season. For the first year since pretty long I had vendors calling me to make sure I did not have any questions about their supplies! It tells a lot about their situations! We do not increase acreage this year and we are diversifying.

(Plainfield NH) Things are ramping up. Vacations for the full timers are all pretty much over. Tax work is under control, as is the paperwork for the H2A folks. We have plants coming in this week, so activities have been centered around greenhouse preparation for that. Monitoring sensors have been checked, logged in and tested as well as the furnaces. Houses were cleaned in the fall, so Mike has been pre filling flats and pots in prep for plant arrival.

The core returning greenhouse crew will start to arrive with coffee mugs and boots later in the week. The return of winter always coincides with the arrival of plants, so we seemed to be resigned to snow removal and mud. However, it would appear as though we got a little too accustomed to and long for the return of the warm days of January and February.

(Argyle NY) Temperatures and sunshine have been moderate for the most part which has helped with regrowth on spinach, chard and kale for our online store. Lettuce material has been the nemesis for us, as we all know, that's what customers want most. It seems quite a few growers are not doing as much winter growing as usual so when we run short and there is no back up. Sales remain average, which is good as we continue to refine the online store process. Insects and diseases in the tunnels has been at a minimum; one spray of M-Pede put aphids in control and we monitor closely as ladybugs not available. Venting a lot as usual and seeding many new beds.

As talk of some supplies being harder to get later in the year, have caused us to purchase them now rather than later and also talk of higher prices like peat moss. Other supplies like Chilean nitrate, which our local supplier is having trouble getting have caused us to look at other suppliers; nothing like change in this business. Overall we are finding supplies but of course at higher prices. The part that makes this easier is we are slowing this farm down as we get older so less is needed. Including labor which is always a hot topic.

UPDATES FROM UVM EXTENSION AGRICULTURAL ENGINEERING

Chris Callahan and Andy Chamberlin

Many winter storage crops love high humidity and low temperatures. Others like low humidity and warmer temperatures. It can be a real challenge to achieve the right balance. As we make air cooler, it holds less water vapor so the difference between high humidity and condensation (rain) becomes less and less. It is not uncommon to run into either overly dry conditions or condensation on walls and ceilings. What's going on here? And what can we do about it? Check out our new blog post that dives in to this topic: <http://go.uvm.edu/humidity>

New Blog Post: Duijndam Machines – Used Equipment from Europe.

<https://go.uvm.edu/duijndam>

New Podcast Episode: Renovating a Barn to Sustain Indian Line Farm: EP4

<https://thefarmersshare.com/2023/02/07/renovating-a-barn-to-sustain-indian-line-farm-ep4/>

UPCOMING EVENTS

March 8. High Tunnel Pests, Old and New

12-1 pm. Free Webinar.

Join UVM entomologist Cheryl Sullivan and UNH entomologist Anna Wallingford to learn about high tunnel pests and how to manage for them. They'll discuss aphids, cutworms, and other foes of your crops. Use this registration link, you will receive a confirmation email.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZwsd--trzgvGtDjnaTF1oBiHoAsk64xgGgA>

March 9. Efficient Water Management in Vegetable Production

5:00-6:30 pm. Free webinar.

Join us for a discussion with Dr. Rachel Schattman focused on strategies for efficient water usage in vegetable and small fruit production. Rachel will cover topics including soil water monitoring (technology and software) and irrigation system decisions for the first 30 minutes of our time together before moving into facilitation of a farmer-to-farmer discussion. Come to listen, share your own experiences, ask questions, troubleshoot, and be inspired about new systems that may make your own farm more climate resilient!

<https://www.nofavt.org/events/efficient-water-management-vegetable-production>

March 15. High Tunnel Ventilation

12-1 pm. Free webinar.

Join UVM Extension Agricultural Engineer Chris Callahan and UVM Extension Vegetable Nutrient Management Specialist, and high tunnel grower, Becky Maden to discuss high tunnel ventilation, including structural orientation, structural design, passive ventilation, mechanical ventilation, best practices for disease management, and NRCS funding available to support implementation. Use this registration link, you will receive a confirmation email.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZwsd--trzgvGtDjnaTF1oBiHoAsk64xgGgA>

March 20. VERMONT PESTICIDE APPLICATOR MEETING

9am-1:30 pm. Webinar \$25 fee.

For certified applicators. Agenda: Certification and Training Updates, Pesticide Compatibility, UVM Extension Field and Forage Update, Worker Protection Standards Review, Reducing Pesticide Drift Risk to Pollinators, Respirator Safety and Fit Testing. This program provides Vermont (categories A and Private 1,2,3,4,5,6) or New York (CORE) recertification credits. To receive credits you must log in individually and answer poll questions during the meeting. Those seeking NY credit must submit a copy of their applicator ID by March 17 and check-in for roll call prior to start of meeting.

Register at: <https://go.uvm.edu/vtpa23>. Fee is \$25. You will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting. Questions? 802-656-0475 or sarah.kingsley@uvm.edu

March 22. Commercial Bumble Bees in High Tunnels

12-1 pm. Free webinar.

Join UVM Extension pollinator support specialist Laura Johnson, Koppert's Inside Sales Representative Anne-Marie Coleman, and Christa Alexander from Jericho Settlers Farm to discuss bumble bee use in high tunnels for crop pollination, including colony biology, optimizing pollinator use from single/multi boxes. Use this registration link, you will receive a confirmation email. <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZwsd--trzgvGtDjnaTF1oBiHoAsk64xgGgA>

March 23. Cut and Carry Mulching for Weed Management and Soil Fertility

4:30-6:00pm. Free webinar.

Cut and carry refers to growing, harvesting and moving loads of mulch from one place to another, usually loose greenchop or silage. This can reduce the need for tillage, suppress weeds, and provide fertility if legumes are used. This webinar will feature: Charlotte Giard-Laliberté of [CETAB](#) in Quebec, who conducts research into cut and carry; Jeremy Barker Plotkin and Dave Tepfer of Simple Gifts Farm on who conducted a SARE-funded trial of cucurbits planted into cut and carry mulch; Spencer Blackwell of Elmer Farm in Middlebury, Vermont, who has tried various methods of planting vegetables using reduced tillage and transferred mulch. To join visit: <https://farmland.org/event/cut-and-carry-for-weed-management-and-fertility-in-organic-cropping-systems/>

March 23. Whole-Farm Water Management

5:00-6:30 pm. Free webinar.

Join us for a discussion with Dr. Joshua Faulkner focused on water management throughout your whole farm system. How does topography and soils affect management decisions? How do we utilize natural and manmade features in our farm landscape to effectively manage through times of too much and too little water? After a 30 minute presentation, Joshua will facilitate a farmer-to-farmer discussion on these topics. Come to listen, share your own experiences, ask questions, troubleshoot, and be inspired about new systems that may make your own farm more climate resilient! <https://www.nofavt.org/events/whole-farm-water-management>