



University of Vermont

Extension

College of Agriculture and Life Sciences

## **Vermont Vegetable and Berry News – March 2, 2026**

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

### **REPORTS FROM THE FIELD**

(Westminster West) Although we don't aim to store crops over winter, those we did stored really well in the insulated barn with just enough heat to keep above freezing. Squash, onions and garlic have been amazing, half a bin of pie pumpkins too!

Tunnel garlic is emerging under row cover. We hope to start tilling beds for early planting in March. I placed an order for an electric cultivating tractor and I am looking forward to getting that dialed in.

(Guildhall) Winter keeps ticking along. Folks keep remarking it's an old-fashioned winter; we could use some old-fashioned oil prices with these 20-below night temperatures for weeks.

Storage has been excellent this year. Quality was good out of the field, and cull rates low, but our really being diligent with running humidifiers has been a game changer. Both for quality, and my water bill.

Sales have been decent, but the terminal isn't buying, so our backstock of potatoes is higher than I'm comfortable with. Volume with wholesalers is generally disappointing. Foodbanks are buying less with state/federal funding cuts. Anyone needs potatoes for their CSA or farm store, hit me up at [sparrowarcfarm@gmail.com](mailto:sparrowarcfarm@gmail.com)

Potato seed availability looks challenging again. Last year's drought affected yields, and persistent sales of uncertified seed has meant diseases have caught up with the supply, particularly Potato Virus Y.

We're excited to upgrade some equipment, particularly our sprayers. Moving up to a 4440 SpraCoupe from 220 SpraCoupes.

The 2026 field plan is not complete, but there are some new things in the mix. We're doubling down on having a huge variety of potatoes. It's been great being able to offer 12+ distinct potatoes to our customers. We're planning on opening our pumpkin fields to u-pick, and we're putting in 30 acres of oats to be combined. And we'll see if we can't sell some cover crop seed.

(Hyde Park) We're having a very cold winter with much snow. We had one thaw and the sloughed snow on the tunnels turned to ice at night, making clearing snow nearly impossible with a 3-pt snowblower.

The alternative is hand removal when absolutely necessary, trying to avoid injury. Managing our 7 tunnels this way is not efficient or sustainable so I am considering other equipment options.

We started the prop house a week later than planned due to sub-zero temperatures when burning propane is equivalent to burning money in a metal barrel for heat. The soil in the other tunnels is rock solid even in sections under layers of row cover and plastic. So my direct seeding schedule is roughly a month behind but will probably not affect production much once good growing weather arrives.

I am struggling with work motivation, especially with this excellent winter recreation season. Once the snow melts and spring sun starts, motivation will not be an issue. But there is plenty of winter ahead, with 11 below predicted this weekend.

We sow a lot of paper pot greens. It's more labor intensive and expensive than direct seeding but provides healthier plants, more consistent germination, and theoretically avoids rodent pressure. Growth is very slow right now as I keep the temps low, and we don't see much sun. But a prop house full of little green plants is always a pleasure to see.

I am looking forward to modifying a manure spreader to be a compost drop spreader, so we can move toward permanent beds. Traditional cultivation of row crops is not optimal for us due to sloping topography and erosion. I also want a system that will allow us to leave the farm for longer periods of time without having to nag others to do tasks. Looking at irrigation timers in the tunnels, automated everything, and field production plan that smooths out the summer workload.

(Dummerston) Not the greatest winter for growing greens. Intense cold snaps did damage to Asian green and mustards. And when I was away around New Years traps were not set regularly enough to control rodents, so voles destroyed the kale. Spinach remains healthy and growth is speeding up. Root veggies stored well this year, so sales at our weekly winter market have been pretty good in spite of the greens situation. Time to start seeds for the next growing season.

(Ange-Gardien, Quebec) I love winter! Lots of snow, lots of shoveling the gutters of our multi-bay greenhouses but now that mid-February has passed, light goes into the greenhouses melting the rest of the snow accumulated in the gutter. Soil has frozen pretty deep in our greenhouse so we can't quite follow our seeding schedule. Overwintered crops look good. Everybody is waiting for fresh greens. Couple of mice in our storage sweet potatoes, will soon get a new cat.

Cash flow looks good so we should be able to go through without extending our credit as long as overwintered crops do not wait too long before harvest. It will be an expansion year at the farm as we mechanize our edamame harvest. We are investing and increasing our cultivated field surface. We go from a 3-year rotation to a 5-year rotation including edamame and full year green manure. Will see if we can help our soil structure.

(Plainfield NH) Folks are returning from vacations to open the first ornamental greenhouses. One propagation house chugged along all winter (expensively). Seeding began in early January with lisianthus and begonias, seeded perennials and some herbs. Now another house is needed for early grafted tomatoes.

The root washer has been moved to make space for the soil pot-filler. Trays, pots and soil have been moved inside to thaw inside our pack-wash facility, which will serve as a potting shed for the next 3 months. Greenhouse heater and vent fan upgrades have been going on since fall, with a bit left to do.

We try to offer obscure or different flowers for sale in the ornamental houses for customers to experiment with. In searching for interesting geranium cultivars I came across a company on e-bay that offered heirloom varieties. I ordered some packets to try as prospective stock plants. The company had a functioning website and was responsive in getting the order here but the seeds were suspiciously small. They turned out to be mustard, not geraniums. The lesson is to be very sure of your seed company before sending them a large check. Additionally, APHIS is not allowing purchase of European seeds without an import license, so make sure seeds of interest come through American seedhouses.

## **FUNDING UPDATES FOR VERMONT FARMS**

### **Assistance for Specialty Crop Farmers (ASCF) Program**

The USDA Farm Service Agency is providing \$1 billion nationwide to ASCF. Specialty crops include just about everything VVBGA farms produce. This program requires more work than the Marketing Assistance for Specialty Crops (MASC) Program from last winter where you just reported gross sales. For AFSC you need to report crop acreage to your local FSA office for individual specialty crops ([listed in this USDA announcement](#)). Crops grown in high tunnels and greenhouses are ineligible. Crop insurance purchase is not required to participate.

The easiest way to report acreage for this program is to set up an appointment with your local FSA office. Documents to bring to the office to aid in reporting include: 1) farm maps to show where crops were planted and 2) planting records with the planting dates and acreage planted. Since payment rates may not be announced before the program deadline, the best strategy is to work with your FSA office to figure out which crops make sense to report for your farm. **Do not delay, the deadline to report crop acreage is March 13, 2026.** Find your local FSA office on the [USDA service center finder website](#).

**Farm Agronomic Practices (FAP) Program- Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food, & Markets** If you do not receive payments for cover crop through the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) or other programs, check out FAP. Payment rates for cover crops are \$55/acre (planted up to October 1) or \$40/acre (planted with soil incorporation October 2nd to 10th). The question to ask yourself: Do I grow enough cover crop to make it worth filling out a simple application now and a [reporting document](#) after seeding? If you are a livestock or hay producer, there are other practice payments available. **Upcoming application deadline April 1.** More complete details and on-line application: <https://agriculture.vermont.gov/fap>

The **Vermont Farmworker Housing Repair Program** provides **forgivable loans of up to \$30,000** to help farmers make critical health and safety improvements to on-farm housing for their workers. This initiative helps ensure farmworker housing is safe, stable, and dignified. Eligible projects may include repairs to roofs, windows, plumbing, and heating systems; upgrades to meet health and safety codes, and improvements that enhance livability and energy efficiency. 0% interest loans are 100% forgivable over time, provided the housing continues to serve farmworkers. For more information and an application:

<https://www.getahome.org/vermont-farmworker-housing-repair-loan-program/>

Please reach out if you need help navigating funding at any point in the process from talking through ideas to reviewing content for applications! Julie Callahan- help with any type of funding for your farm- [Julie.callahan@uvm.edu](mailto:Julie.callahan@uvm.edu); Rachel Stievater- help understanding and accessing NRCS programs- [Rachel.Stievater@uvm.edu](mailto:Rachel.Stievater@uvm.edu)

**For a full list of funding opportunities visit:** <https://go.uvm.edu/vegfundinglist>

**VVBGA GROWER [WEBINARS](#).** Wednesday noon-1:00. Free. [Pre-register here](#). Recordings get posted on [YouTube](#), Spotify and Apple Podcasts.

March 4. Understanding wholesale distribution options and costs

March 11. Organic tunnel management of powdery mildew and other foliar diseases

March 18. Produce Safety audits and traceability for wholesale markets

March 25. Crimp, rip, or strip: innovative cover cropping for soil health

April 1. Introducing the Vermont Herb Growers Initiative

April 8. Learning from high tunnel enterprise budgets

April 15. Organic potato pest and disease management

April 22. Soil health bang for your buck

April 29. Plastic mulches in vegetable production: sources, alternatives, pros and cons

## **[STATEWIDE MEETINGS](#) TO LEARN ABOUT FSA AND NRCS PROGRAMS**

These sessions will help farmers learn about Farm Service Agency and Natural Resources Conservation Service programs. Come hear from a farmer and their NRCS Conservation Planner, FSA staff, and get support on-the-spot with filling out the paperwork to be eligible for funding. The sessions are free, and include light lunch, but space is limited and [pre-registration](#) is required. Questions? [Rachel.Stievater@uvm.edu](mailto:Rachel.Stievater@uvm.edu)

Thursday March 5. Brattleboro  
Tuesday March 17. Middlebury  
Tuesday March 24. St. Johnsbury  
Thursday April 2. Williston  
Tuesday April 7. St. Albans  
Thursday April 9. Morrisville

**BIOCHAR FOR SOIL HEALTH. WEBINAR. MARCH 4, 1-2:30**

Learn about using biochar as a soil amendment. Sam Dixon, Shelburne Farms, speaks about the Farm's use of biochar. Chadd Cupit, NRCS-VT Resource Soil Scientist, will give an overview of how NRCS is supporting farmers using biochar. Heather Darby will present highlights of on-farm research trials with biochar and manure applications and their impact on soil health and yields. Hao Chen will present research on different types of engineered biochar. Sara Kellemen will talk about American Farmland Trusts' biochar trials in ME and MA. [Register here](#)

**FARM FIRST "LET'S TALK" SESSION. ON-LINE MARCH 4, NOON-1:00**

Join Farm First to talk about self-care, stress, and the upcoming Spring season! Come to share or just listen. "Zoom" door prizes for the first five registrants! Everyone who completes the short registration form and survey will be mailed a small care package with goodies and Farm First resources! [Register here](#). Questions? Angela Shea LICSW, LADC, [angelas@farmfirst.org](mailto:angelas@farmfirst.org)

**MANAGING SWEDE MIDGE. WEBINAR MARCH 6, 9:00-11:30**

This invasive fly causes serious economic losses to brassica crops. Due to its small size and hidden feeding habits, swede midge is often called an "invisible pest" and damage may be misdiagnosed. Topics include: Swede midge life cycle. Crop damage symptoms. Current management recommendations. New research findings. On-farm case studies (focused on organic management).

[Register here](#). Cost: Free!

**INTERSEEDING: WHAT'S NEW. WEBINAR MARCH 10, NOON-1:00**

Interseeding for corn, veggies, and more is still as valuable as ever, but it's a good time to revisit how to make it work for you in different systems. Dr. Natalie Lounsbury will discuss recent research out of UNH. [Click here for more info](#).

**VIRTUAL ASPARAGUS SCHOOL. MARCH 17, 12:30-4:00**

Join this [Zoom event](#) organized by Cornell University to learn from experts from Michigan, Ontario, Quebec and New York. Fee: \$20. Questions? Elisabeth Hodgdon, [eh528@cornell.edu](mailto:eh528@cornell.edu)

## **NH/VT MEETING WITH CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATES. MARCH 23, 10:00-2:00**

Alyson's Orchard in Walpole NH, lunch included. [Click here for more info](#) and here [to register](#). Hear from and talk to Congressional delegates. We expect Sen Shaheen and Sen Welch in person, and reps from the offices of Goodlander, Sanders, and Balint. Organized by the [CT River Watershed Farmers Alliance](#).

## **ORGANIC DRY BEAN PRODUCTION ON-LINE SHORT COURSE**

This free short course provides a comprehensive overview dry bean production based on research and practical field experience. Watch classes on the UVM Extension Northwest Crops and Soil program [YouTube channel](#).

## **SIGN UP FOR ON-FARM SWEDE MIDGE MATING DISRUPTION TRIAL**

Vermont brassica growers are invited to partner with UVM to participate in on-farm swede midge mating disruption trials planned for this summer. We are seeking farms willing to host pheromone mating disruption (PMD) dispensers to evaluate this management approach; if interested complete this [5-minute survey](#). Questions? [Vincent.Tamakloe@uvm.edu](mailto:Vincent.Tamakloe@uvm.edu)