



University of Vermont

Extension

College of Agriculture and Life Sciences

Vermont Vegetable and Berry News – April 1, 2026

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

REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

(Westminster) With less frost than usual in the ground - the early snow covering last fall helped everything is drying out quickly. So, we got out on our fields earlier than usual. (Admission: we still do some moldboard plowing; nothing else seems to kill the winter rye.) A couple of plantings of lettuce and kale are in the cold frames and we hope to be transplanting by mid-April.

We've also been seeding specialty crops like tomatoes and peppers for the farmstand. Then we'll start seeding beets and carrots. We won't plant chard this year; it's too labor-intensive and disease prone. The rest of our crop mix should stay the same.

We're still packing red beets, turnips, watermelon and daikon radish from the warehouse. Everything is holding up well and sales are steady. Meanwhile we've been cutting spinach from our greenhouses, and soon, from the field.

We've put in applications for our H2-A guest workers and expect that to go smoothly. The price of diesel fuel is a concern, especially with early-season tractor work and for shipping. Let's hope it gets sorted out soon. If the price stays high, we hope our customers will agree to pay more to help cover the added cost.

(Burlington) Happy to see longer days and warmer temperatures. Tunnel greens are growing like gangbusters, hard to keep up with harvest of all the spinach and lettuce. Trialing a 6-week spring greens CSA share option for our members who can't manage a full November-May winter share. We like to capture the retail dollar when we can and so far, it has been well received.

Despite the cold winter, our unheated tunnel parsley is lagging way behind our cilantro, something we haven't seen before. Curious what parsley and cilantro people are growing in unheated winter tunnels.

Our propagation house is filling up with transplants. Plasticulture strawberries look good after uncovering, and spring tillage is underway. I am hoping our generally forgiving sandy ground avoids major flooding this year. Farm on!

(Putney) It's raining now, and we needed it. Garlic is well up in the tunnel planting and we fed and watered them. Garlic in the field is just starting to emerge on the white plastic mulch, definitely slower than using black but it should pay off with slightly larger bulbs by harvest time.

Ginger is emerging strongly in propagation trays and should be ready to plant in a tunnel in 2 to 3 weeks. Turmeric is not doing much so far, disappointing. Finished tomato grafting and will have extra plugs very soon, over 1,100 this year. Herbs and vegetable plugs look strong.

Excited by some new equipment and reducing labor hours. Worried about rising costs for everything. I was hoping not to raise prices but it's unavoidable if we want to stay in business, maybe a 10% increase if not more on certain crops will be accepted by our buyers. I hope so, if they want us to stay afloat!

(Guildhall) We've still got excellent quality and variety stored in the potato barn. The humidifiers have really been a game changer for crop quality. One variety of whites looks as good right now as it did going into the barn. Another huge benefit to the high humidity is it's made the barn's temperature swings slower. We've got about 200k lb. yet to sell so hopefully sales are decent the next few weeks.

Higher fertilizer prices are the talk of the town, and freight rates are thru the roof. I'm sure we're several weeks away from tillage still, but I'm excited to get going.

(Shrewsbury) About 15 years ago I saw a presentation of a vegetable grower sowing a wide variety of cold hardy seeds in very late fall, just before snow cover or frozen soil. We tried that for the first time late last November, covering with a single layer of row cover through the winter. Right now under the row cover are many cotyledons of spinach, lettuce, arugula, salad turnips, bok choy, and baby kale. They're planted in ridges, to help keep the roots from becoming waterlogged in our heavier soil that can become saturated in a wet spring. I just uncovered to fertilize, and I'm hopeful that at least some of these fall planted greens will help fill a tight spot in our spring CSA in late April and early May, when the fall seeded high tunnel greens are winding down and the earliest outdoor planting are not quite ready.

(Grand Isle) Blueberry bushes look great. Not seeing any winter injury. There is some sign of deer feeding on a couple of bushes. Rabbits have done damage as usual on the new shoots.

(Orwell) We did several rounds of successful tomato grafting; now success is all about the aftercare. Our list of things to stay on top of in the tunnels grows longer: establishing beneficials before aphids and thrips take off, ordering pollinating bumble bees, having all the amendments and sprays on hand, and so on.

We're facing the reality of many years of tunnel growing in clay soils with highly alkaline water: pH is sky high, and after talking about alternative sources of water, it seems like we really need to change sources.

We've been working up to having 4 drip lines per bed for tomatoes, which seems to help with even moisture and nutrient availability. This year we are hand watering the bed for a week or so before switching to drop to really get the whole area moist.

(Plainfield NH) Mud season on the river has been pretty short. Outside activities have been confined to reskinning tunnels and rolling down sides in vegetable high tunnels. We mowed off the fall raspberries today and spread compost or manure on the rows. If the weather continues warm, we will uncover the rhubarb and hopefully do a bit of blueberry pruning.

One of our fields is being rooted up by wild boar, but so far only between the rows of blueberries. Fingers crossed someone will kill them before they change their mind and start rooting up the bushes.

Six people working in the ornamental greenhouses have been cranking out hangers and 4.5" material and soon will start perennial, annual and vegetable seedlings which are more tedious. Today they were working outside, transplanting on wagons and old truck beds.

Still trying to figure out the field crop rotation. It would be a lot easier if we knew whether the summer was going to be a drought or a swamp.

(Little Compton RI) Our 13 greenhouses survived 38" of snow and 75mph winds! My son was up 5 hours that Sunday night battling the worst of it, using roof shovels with 17' extending handles. Note to self, have snowshoes at the ready next time.

Buying the new BioMeter to test compost teas and other biological inputs this season. Hopefully I'll be able to separate snake oils from the real deal by next fall. Organic fertilizers have not rocketed up in price like conventional materials, so far. Last heating oil delivery was \$5.10 gallon! With three tomato greenhouses planted I'm thinking we will have to start May tomatoes around \$8.95 a pound! Scary but once people taste the sweet fully ripe fruit, I think it will be fine. Especially, with so many other items in our world inflation bound.

I've got to be more attentive to two-spotted spider mites this season. They overwhelmed us last year and got into winter squash seedlings in the tunnel; damn near lost our winter squash crop! Greenhouse cucumbers are a good trap crop. We'll be vigilant scouting and will quarantine purchased plants until proven bug-free.

(Argyle NY) We submitted high tunnels soil tests to the UMaine Soil Lab for the top two inches vs. top four inches of soil, to assess salt levels. We found levels of 5 or even 6 mmhos/cm (a measure of electrical conductivity) in the top two inches and about 3 to 4 mmhos/cm in the top four inches. When we manually flushed the soil with six inches of water the salt levels went to less than 1 mmhos/cm. Adding gypsum may also help but won't fix the root cause of the salts. We are moving to more overhead irrigation and will work more on this issue because it is affecting our production a lot, especially salad greens.

We seeded all 3 types of pole peas in successions starting in February and started transplanting them into the tunnels on Hortonova fence in March... looking good. Customer orders are staying strong every week. We have very little weeding to do since all tunnel soil were steamed last fall. We also have very few pests, but there are annoying fungus gnats in the greenhouse. This week we will hook up the pond water for field irrigation.

SOIL HEALTH UPDATE

Becky Maden, UVM Extension

It's time to think about spring cover cropping! Spring-sown peas and oats germinate at relatively low temperatures and can be sown as soon as the ground has thawed. Peas can be an excellent source of summer nitrogen. Sow at a rate of 100 lbs./acre peas (remember to inoculate) and 20 lbs./acre oats. Terminate as peas begin to bloom. Follow by summer-planted crops like zucchini or peppers. Reach out to rebecca.maden@uvm.edu for guidance on cover cropping, nutrient management, reduced tillage--practices that enhance soil health and protect water quality.

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

April 1. Diversifying herb enterprises for economic return beyond the “bunch”

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

CLAUSEN'S GREENHOUSE GROWER TOUR

April 9, 1:00 – 2:30

A tour of the facilities will be led by Lori King, IPM Manager. Ann Hazelrigg from UVM's Plant Diagnostic lab will talk about diseases. Greg Bryant, a Bio Rep from Sierra Biologicals, will talk about biological controls. Cheryl Frank Sullivan from UVM and Matt Wood from VAAFm will be present to answer questions. 2 pesticide recertification credits will be offered. **Pre-registration is required.** Email Lori King at lori@claussens.com to sign up.

RESTAURANT AND FARM PARTNERSHIP SERIES

These 9 events across the state are for Vermont farmers and restaurant buyers who want to build stronger, more effective working relationships around local sourcing for the restaurant market channel. Running from April through September, the events explore real-world connections for the restaurant market channel through farm tours, restaurant visits, industry meetups, and a live webinar. Registration is required. [Click here](#) for dates and details. Produced with the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets. Questions? tara@wildpearcreative.com