Vermont Vegetable and Berry News –April 30, 2019

compiled by Vern Grubinger, University of Vermont Extension
(802) 257-7967 ext. 303, vernon.grubinger@uvm.edu
www.uvm.edu/vtvegandberry

REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

(Pownal) Pruning is complete on all raspberries, blackberries and blueberries. Many trailer loads of old canes/branches removed. Huge job but we finally finished. We have also completed all the organic fertilizing of all berries and worked into the mulch. This has been a cold process this year. Blackberries and blueberries look very good with good budding started. The raspberries do not look well. Winter damage must have hit, which surprised us. Last fall we removed 250 Encore raspberries and have a site prepared for replacements with Eden. I wished now that we had removed the remaining 250 Preludes and started all over. Weather reports do not sound promising, too much rain for planting new stock. Gardens have been plowed but not completely tilled.

(East Dorset) We have enjoyed steady help the past few weeks and the blueberry farm is the better for it. We have found a few college students who are hard workers and want regular work. Additionally, they are easier to supervise than my wife. The students like her better though as she has been known to put out a big pot of chili for them after a hard day's work.

We started pruning 3/21 and got in a full day just before the 10 inches of snow. We pruned off and on the next two weeks. Pruning ended 4/11. We ended the pruning season with our highest number of bushes pruned in the eight years we have owned the farm. The wet spring has us worried about Mummy Berry and with the almost daily rain there is not much we can do about it now.

We are thinking about farm to table dinners at the farm and are curious if others feel it has been beneficial for them. Any thoughts are appreciated. Good luck to all this season.

(Rochester) Winter damage, from desiccation and deer browse, is the most extensive that we have seen in our twelve years of raising blueberries. It can make our pruning decisions simple and we do need to remove a lot of fruiting wood anyway for reasons of insect control. So we cut like crazy but plenty of viable buds remain on most bushes. Another unusual feature of this year's weather (or climate) is how much warm, heavy rain we have had early in the spring, leading to rapid bud development. We have gone from pruning in the snow to running out of time in just a couple of weeks.

(S. Royalton) After 25 years the deer have finally found my all you eat salad bar. Does anyone have deer repellent experience with Plantskydd or another type of product. I've been using the lead poisoning method but would love a method that doesn't involve constant vigilance.

(Dummerston) Tomato plants recently transplanted in a high tunnel seem to have squeaked by under row cover during last night's 32-degree temp. The field is still very muddy even with tile drains flowing steadily. We're experimenting with reusing last year's plastic mulch covered beds. A few from the fall still have plastic in good enough condition so by adding a little fertilizer to each hole and removing the old plants last year's pepper beds become this year's early cabbage beds. I tried this a little last year and it seemed to work pretty well. High tunnel greens (spinach, bok choi, baby lettuce, mustards, baby kale) are doing very well along with some radishes, scallions and salad turnips. So my first year of year-round CSA farming is off to a good start.

(Hinesburg) Hoop house greens are growing and selling well. October-transplanted hoop house salanova went into winter smaller this past year than the year before, and is doing much better. Interestingly, salanova transplanted into hoop house on March 18 is maturing only 1 week later than the overwintered batch.

I've heard that peas should be soaked before planting, and have been doing that for several years. This year, I also started peas in seedling flats. The soaked ones are germinating poorly, and one flat of unsoaked germinated 100%.

I overwintered Bridger and Electric onions; the hoop house batch made it through winter well. Few survived outdoors under 2 layers of remay. Had cutworms on hoop house onions. Surprising what a few dozen cutworms can do to onion planting when they go unidentified.

(Shrewsbury) Our fields are still too wet to prepare for seeding and transplanting...springs like this make me happy that we are more conservative in our seeding dates for the first outdoor transplants. This year in our heated tunnel we are trying interplanting tomatoes with tightly spaced early greens, growing on bare soil. The greens are thriving in the warm, nutrient rich soil. They are also hosting the beginnings of aphids, which I'm attempting to control with Mycotrol and Azaguard, followed by ladybeetles.

Comparing our harvest records from our two winter tunnels--one with the soil temperature heated to 45 degrees, the other unheated--I was intrigued to see that in this winter the soil heat did not have an effect on the total yield per square foot. It did, however, push the spring flush about a month earlier, into the late winter when it's more valuable for our markets than having a ton of greens in late March and April.

(Plainfield NH) Greenhouses opened for retail sales this past weekend. Weather was not conducive to high sales, but it was still good to get the season underway. Weather has been generally cool and damp with some warm nights that greened up the grass, chased the last of the ice and snow, made the maple buds swell up and magnolias bloom.

The strawberries are uncovered and fertilized. They were encased in ice from November until a week ago; suffice to say I am not expecting to make a fortune on that enterprise this year, but a slow spring may allow them a bit of time to photosynthesize and rebound before blooming and coming under fruit load.

Some tillage is done although the rains and minor flooding have not helped in fields with heavier ground or fields abutting the river. Ray has been experimenting planting out some early paper pot transplants of carrots, spinach and beet. I was able to get some crops direct seeded before the recent rains. Prepping land for planting out onions, potatoes, and strawberries, but much attention still to be paid to the retail greenhouses. Have not had any interest from locals to work on the field crews; we are getting two more H2A laborers at strawberry harvest.

(Little Compton RI) This has been a record year for April rain in RI. I have broken every soil health theology I can think of trying to keep key crops in on schedule. If peas aren't in the ground by April 15th…you might as well throw them away! Trying a crop of beets in the understory of our first greenhouse tomato house. This year we will have a full house of greenhouse peppers and a house of split between eggplant and specialty peppers.

Trying to give our alliums a good early shot of nitrogen to get them off on a good footing so will be giving them a liquid brew of blood meal, Neptune's fish and liquid humates. Giving it a go with some cherry trees in our new peach planting. Got a plan to handle birds and sudden showers during harvest. If it works it will be a grand slam at the farmers' markets.

(Argyle NY) With record high water levels and consistently warm weather, it's been a roller coaster ride for farming. Storms nearly ruined a newly re-built irrigation pump that went ¾ underwater as the stream rose over 4 feet above flood stage.

We lost a lot of our first plantings of seeds and found out the biggest drawback of using the tarp system: we prepared beds ahead in 3 fields, laid the tarps out (100x24 and 100x32), then came the rains. Water ran off the tarps, washing away soil, seeds, eroding driveways, and depositing soils all over row-covers that were next to them. Oh brother...more work BUT soils kept dry underneath and it's working to kill weeds!

We have had challenges with insects and diseases as well. After two groups of ladybugs, which have always done the trick, we cannot get aphids completely under control in the tunnels nor greenhouse. Moving plants outside interestingly made the aphids disappear almost immediately. Using M-Pede this week.

Our high tunnel greens have exploded in production and the spinach tunnel is just starting to show some yellowing on a few of the over 25 varieties due to the slow, cloudy spring. Aerostar lettuce was the first to show downy mildew last week and samples are going to CA to be tested to determine the race. It's spreading, and Cladosporium on the tunnel spinach is prevalent as well. Crazy spring!

On the good side, shoots have done great on the greenhouse radiant heat mats, and we added nasturtium shoots to our mix. We replaced most of our radiant heat mats on our rolling benches with the same kind, formally from Radiant Roots; we are now dealing direct with the manufacturer, working to be a dealer in the future. We like them much better than any other radiant systems out there.

Our annual bed strawberries look great, and overwintered onions inside the small tunnel are real nice but we lost a lot outside, even on raised beds, for no known reason. Garlic received a N and biological drench and we are concerned with the wetness as many are not up. We have spread Contans on the farm as a preventative for Sclerotinia (White Mold), and we need drier weather to get many transplants out. Farmers' markets have been strong and we move outside this week for the start of the "summer markets."

LEEK MOTH UPDATE

The first leek moth flight of the season has likely begun throughout much of Vermont. Adult leek moths will continue to fly through mid-May, laying eggs on overwintering garlic and other early season alliums. Shortly thereafter, you may begin to see the characteristic windowpane feeding damage of the leek moth caterpillars. Typically, the first flight doesn't result in significant damage to alliums, though garlic scapes can be disproportionally affected because of the timing of this larval generation.

The few known management options include covering plants with row cover at night to exclude the nocturnal female moths from laying eggs. Where this is not feasible or cost effective, chemical controls should be applied. Spinosad (Entrust, organic) and spinetoram (Radiant SC, conventional) have been shown to be effective chemical controls but must time timed appropriately, especially in onions because of caterpillar feeding behavior.

Canadian research has consistently found that properly timed insecticide applications made 7-10 days following a peak flight of leek moth adults can effectively manage damage resulting from the following larval generation. For more information about leek moth check out the newly-updated leek moth information center website at:
https://nysipm.cornell.edu/agriculture/vegetables/leek-moth-information-center/

We are scaling back our own statewide monitoring efforts this season, but we are providing leek moth trap setups along with a season's worth of lures free of charge (while supplies last), in exchange for sharing your monitoring data via an online submission page. This will enable us to track leek moth flights throughout the season and provide periodic updates. If you have any questions or concerns about leek moth, or are interested in monitoring leek moth on your farm, please contact Vic Izzo at vizzo@uvm.edu and/or Scott Lewins at slewins@uvm.edu.

UMASS EXTENSION VEGETABLE NOTES

I highly recommend this newsletter for commercial growers. It's free via email. To subscribe, go to: https://ag.umass.edu/vegetable/vegetable-notes/subscribe.

Each issue has timely crop management and pest information (often an advance warning for us in Vermont since we are colder) and includes great color photos.

Check out the April 25 issue with articles on **maggot pests of vegetables, seed potato considerations, and calibrating backpack sprayers**:
https://ag.umass.edu/sites/ag.umass.edu/files/newsletters/april_25_2019_vegetable_notes.pdf

NEW CASE STUDY OF WASH AND PACK SPACE IN OLD BARN

Read how an old barn has been turned into an effective wash and pack space, and watch the video interview with Silas Doyle-Burr titled "Last Resort Farm Not Stalled by Dairy Barn Conversion." The area of the barn transformed is 1,950 ft² which includes 4 new coolers all controlled and monitored by a system set up by Vermont Energy Control Systems. Ceilings are finished with Trusscore, covering up existing flaking paint, and enclosing new insulation. Cooler walls painted white, large south facing windows and an "open" floor plan makes for a bright and useful working environment. For details visit: go.uvm.edu/lrf

2019 ON-FARM WORKSHOPS FOR VEGETABLE AND BERRY GROWERS

The UVM Extension vegetable and berry team has put together nine workshops across the state in partnership with a diversity of VVBGA farms, from June through November. Here are the descriptions:

http://www.uvm.edu/vtvegandberry/meetings/2019VegandBerryFarmWorkshops4-16-19.pdf