



University of Vermont

Extension

College of Agriculture and Life Sciences

Vermont Vegetable and Berry Grower News – May 1, 2025

Compiled by Vern Grubinger, University of Vermont Extension

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

ON-FARM WORKSHOP. BLUEBERRY PLANT HEALTH AND POLLINATORS

Wednesday May 21, 4:00-6:30 pm

Wildwood Blueberry Farm, 2977 Mad Tom Road, East Dorset VT 05253

Cost: Free for VVBGA member farms, \$10 all others. Just show up!

Wildwood Berry Farm is a 4-acre U-Pick blueberry farm with approximately 2,000 bushes, owned and operated by Rick Travers, who will provide an overview of the farm's management practices and goals. He will share his experience with making and selling value-added products. Ann Hazelrigg will answer questions on insect pests and diseases. Vern Grubinger will discuss nutrient management, pruning, and mulching. Laura Johnson will describe how to optimize habitat to support pollinators, and Leslie Spencer of UVM Gund Institute will lead us into the field to capture and ID pollinators. Tom Aiken of NRCS-Vermont will describe programs that can provide funding for conservation practices on berry farms.

Our [on-farm workshops](#) for commercial growers and people that work with them are open to all. If severe weather is predicted, an event may be cancelled, and a notice will be sent to the VVBGA listserv. To join the VVBGA please go to www.vvbga.org.

TREE FRUIT TWILIGHT MEETINGS

Thursday and Friday, May 8 and 9, 4:00-6:00 pm

Join the Vermont Tree Fruit Growers Association and UVM Extension on **May 8** at Yates Family Orchard, 1074 Davis Road, Hinesburg, VT **or May 9** at Wellwood Orchard at 529 Wellwood Orchards Road, Springfield, VT. Topics discussed include tree fruit management practices, value added products, marketing, pest and disease updates, pollinators, and funding opportunities and challenges. The events are free and geared to commercial growers and people that work with them, and offer one VT pesticide recertification training credit for categories 1A, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6. For details contact laura.o.johnson@uvm.edu

REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

(Ascutney) Roots are out of cold storage and cleaning is completed. Started the new cycle and have 3 greenhouses planted with early crops for retail; cherry and slicing tomatoes off to a great start. No critter damage this year, as we did a lot of trapping last season and laid out lots of trapping tubes early.

With warm, dry weather we were able to get kale, collard, chard and cabbage in the ground. Then put some beets, carrots and peas in before the rain. Have opportunities for selling early lettuce so back to pulling fabric, haven't missed it. Getting ready to move flowers and seedlings out for Mother's Day farm stand opening. Asparagus has just begun to pop.

Replacing burnt-out fan motors, doing tractor tune-ups. Off to a decent start with a good crew. Awaiting our H2A workers and all begins! Hope we all see an uneventful season.

(Cabot) Fields are dry. I can plow with no problem. The ground temp is 50 to 55 degrees. Going to plant strawberries this week. Corn in two to three weeks. Started planting in trays. I am two weeks ahead. Hope it stays like this.

(E. Wallingford) Finished pruning blueberries and peach trees. Lots of deer damage; they are eating fruit buds and pushing small peach trees over. On the good side, peach trees made it through winter and still have decent fruit buds where deer couldn't reach. Still have to get through frost season; it was snowing here this morning! Time to grind brush and service tractors before weeds start popping.

(Grand Isle) Blueberry plants look good. Very little rabbit damage. No deer damage. Started pruning a bit late this year. Have always wanted to purchase a power pruner but had a hard time justifying the cost. Purchased a Milwaukee pruner and it reduced pruning time by at least a third.

(Pownal) Have been working the berries all of April. Started in the raspberries with pruning, fertilizing and weeding. They are budded and starting to show leaves on the canes. Blueberries have been weeded and fertilized. They have started to bud out nicely. Pruning done last year shows great results. Spreading mulch on blueberries each day, a huge job. The weeds and grass never give up here. Vegetable gardens still need plowing and tilling; soil needs to warm up.

(Westminster West) Field garlic looks excellent with little winter loss compared to recent years. Garlic in the tunnel looks fantastic and should give us a much earlier crop than the field. Entering our 3 week period of shipping herb and vegetable starts to partner stores in Vermont, NH and MA. Sales started slow but back on track this week.

Ground water levels are very low for this time of year, installed a new more efficient jet pump to handle our needs. Cutting seed potatoes and doing subsoiling next few days to prepare for field crops. Excited about this season.

(Orwell) Tunnel crops are starting to take off with a little sun and warm weather, night temps have been reasonable so far. We have a new insect pest in our prop house, which Cheryl Frank Sullivan (UVM Entomologist) identified as onion thrips. They have done a number on early cucumbers and pepper transplants. A bit of a surprise since we don't have much in that space over the winter except for a treasured rosemary plant—which Cheryl informed us is a home for these pests. We haven't ripped out the rosemary plant but instead trying a medley of beneficials and spot spraying.

(Westminster) Our first plantings of lettuce and kale are in the ground; the first beets and carrots are seeded. Strawberries look good. We've raked off the straw mulch and, with luck, we'll have berries in late May or early June. Sweet corn and cabbage transplants are in the cold frames and we hope to get them into the ground soon. We're still packing out turnips, rutabagas, and watermelon radishes stored from last year, so that helps with cash flow.

One thing we won't have this year is broiler chickens – we haven't been able to get chicks this year, the first time in many years they've been unavailable.

Our first H-2A workers from Jamaica are set to arrive May 3. The program's adverse effect wage rate, the minimum wage we're required to pay all our workers, went up over a dollar an hour again. Someone in the federal government is not listening to us. It's unclear whether this program will be sustainable for us in the future; it might eventually be cost-prohibitive. On the plus side, we've had a few more local people apply for work.

(Ange-Gardien, Quebec) Still too wet to go in the field. Greenhouse producing very well, sales are up. There is a real reaction from Canadian customers to the tariffs (even if I do not really know what is going on. Quite frankly, I just try to concentrate on what I control on the farm) that pushes the demand up for locally grown vegetables. So we are trying to surf the wave (again).

We have a new shareholder in the farm. Really helps to reduce the mental load of managing the whole farm. It frees some headspace to keep on working on projects that will allow the farm to be more resilient! Have a great season to you all!

(Hudson NY) This week dried out enough to get our first transplant crops into our low and wet fields: bunching greens, onions, zucchini, and lettuces. Soil temps came up to the mid-50s so we got our potato field prepped and planted, just in time for some nice rain last Friday and Saturday.

Carrots and beets will go in next week and then we prep ground for sweet potatoes and winter squash. We're busy drilling spring cover crops including phacelia and peas. We just sold out of our insane 2024 sweet potato crop (hurray!), About to start renovating rhubarb beds.

Aphids are in the greenhouse and there's a lot flea beetles in the field. We see beneficial wasps in the greenhouse, supported by alyssum flowering in trays. We'll have good numbers of parasitized aphids even before introducing additional beneficials from IPM labs.

(Plainfield NH) Our focus has been on greenhouse ornamentals and getting the retail open. In the greenhouse we see whitefly, some aphids (per usual this time of year) and broad mites. Predatory mites were not working so we had to go in with abamectin.

In the fields we fertilized, uncovered, and set up pipe in the strawberries. Carrots, spinach and beets are in the ground. Tomato greenhouses getting planted. Our switch from top to side grafting has been positive, with a high success rate, which is great because of the value of the high tunnel tomato crop and the cost of seed. We rented a soil steamer for our 3 oldest tunnels which have been in tomatoes for 35 consecutive years. We are looking for a bump in growth.

We invested in a small excavator with a flail head to deal with field edges as the last few years has seen a dramatic influx of grapevine, bittersweet, and multiflora rose. Very good to get a leg up on beating back the edge of the fields. This week 5 of our Jamaican guys arrived.

(Argyle NY) A slow transition from winter to spring this past month made for a unique month. Daffodils started blooming March 22 and are still blooming today. The rains have been welcoming but we had our irrigation set up early in the month because of the dryness and the tunnels needing it. Only one night was worrisome for freezing so far. Strawberries are blooming well outside and setting strawberries in the tunnels. Should be ready to pick in 2 weeks.

Aphids in the tunnels almost got out of hand. But the hover flies came at the end of March and there aren't any now, except gray (cabbage) aphids are another story as the hover flies don't touch those. Flea beetles are out now and netting is on to protect crops. Allium leafminer is out now so we have to net the garlic and chives too.

CREATE A PICK-YOUR OWN FARM LISTING

Last year we developed an easy-to-use website for VVBGA members to promote PYO. It takes just 5 minutes to create a listing that you can update whenever you like. The public can find your farm at vermontpickyourown.org using a [map](#) or [list](#). Thanks to the 43 farms who created listings so far to market their PYO crops including apples, berries, flowers, pumpkins, and more.

How to create a listing

- 1) Login to your VVBGA member account at <https://vvbga.org/>
- 2) Click "Pick-Your-Own-Listing" on the left-hand menu.
- 3) Click the orange "Add Your Listing" button.
- 4) When you click on each section of the listing, a drop down will appear to fill in the details of your farm's PYO operation.
- 5) Hit the "Save" button at the bottom of the page after you complete your listing.

Questions, or need help? Julie Callahan, julie.callahan@uvm.edu, 518-944-7149

BUILD SOIL FERTILITY WITH SPRING COVER CROPS

Becky Maden, UVM Extension

It's not too late to plant field peas and oats. Sown now, this cover crop mix can provide a significant amount of nitrogen to subsequent cash crops, typically a third to a half of the cash crop's needs. Seed at 100 lbs. per acre field peas (remember to inoculate!) plus 20 lbs./acre oats; incorporate the cover crop at bloom.

Because it is mediated by soil microbes, the release of crop-available N from cover crops takes time; it is quicker when conditions are warm and moist (but not too wet). A good guesstimate is that N availability from a cover crop will peak at 4 to 6 weeks after incorporation. Most cash crops will still need at least 50% of their N need applied as fertilizer at planting. To read more about estimating plant available N from cover crops, read [this publication](#) by Oregon State University Extension. For support with cover crop and nutrient management planning, contact rebecca.maden@uvm.edu

POLLINATOR SUPPORT REPORT

Laura Johnson, UVM Extension

Mid-April brought sightings of the unequal cellophane bee (*Colletes inaequalis*), including at the UVM Horticultural Research Farm in Burlington VT. This bee species nests in the soil and is one of the first to emerge in the spring. It is an important early spring fruit crop pollinator, particularly for tree fruit. Mating aggregations of this wild bee may be noticed on early, warm, sunny spring days before crop bloom. They can be found flying within inches of the ground, like over dirt farm roads or grassy patches, darting and tumbling around with one another.

ORGANIC FARMING MENTORSHIPS AVAILABLE

The [Transition to Organic Partnership Program](#) (TOPP) pairs experienced organic mentor farmers with organic-curious and transitioning producers. Receive one-on-one support, set your own goals, visit each other's operations, ask your burning questions, and be set up for success in your organic certification journey! It's open to any type of producer--veg, berry, other crops (hay, grain), flowers, maple, livestock, dairy, processors, handlers, etc. From a mentee: "The mentorship program was absolutely vital to our success with our certification. My mentor was consistent, proactive, kind, supportive, and positive and he seriously helped to calm my anxiety about the inspection!"

SURVEY ON FARMLAND OWNERSHIP AND TRANSFER

Zachary Smith, an extensionist at UVM and PhD student invites Vermont farmers to take part in a anonymous survey designed to better understand farmers' perspectives on community health, farmland ownership, and sustainable practices. [Click here](#) to take the 15-minute survey. It is entirely confidential, there are no personal identifiers.

VVBGA WINTER GROWER WEBINAR RECORDINGS

If you missed any of the weekly series from Feb-April, the full line up is [posted here](#), with links to recordings on YouTube, and to podcasts.