



Vermont Vegetable and Berry News – May 10, 2011

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<http://www.uvm.edu/vtvegandberry>

REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

(Grand Isle) Our town is called 'Grand Isle' but we are not quite so grand and large this week since the lake is at an all-time high of 103.2 feet and portions of the island have disappeared. We have an electric irrigation pump in a pump house and we have raised it three times recently. The pump house used to be on the shore but now it is an island unto itself. We are now the proud owners of two pairs of waterproof hip waders. A new item on our farm inventory list! The soils are cold and saturated with water so we are having a late start to the season. I wish we could send some of this water to New Mexico where they are having a terrible drought.

(Warren VT) Onions are in, as are the first few outdoor greens seedings. Waiting on compost to prep carrot and potato land; it's been too wet to screen it. High tunnel salad greens are in full swing. We are looking forward to the next dry stretch to move our high tunnels. The first one was moved onto strawberries 3 weeks ago. The berries are in full bloom and now have a bumblebee hive for pollination. What a stress relief to not be sweating the moisture and temps. Peas in one movable tunnel will be flowering soon and things like rappini, dandelion greens and cilantro will be ready in the next week or so. Hothouse tomatoes are on their 4th truss and we are hoping to see ripe fruit about the same time as the berries and peas come in. Had leaf spot on overwintered spinach and any spring seedings in the same houses got it too. The seedings in houses that did not have spinach look great. To me dealing with things like that was a big reason for making the houses movable.

(Plainfield NH) I guess spring is pretty much gotten underway; I seem to be wearing more leather than rubber on my feet. It really has only been warm enough to bring out the black flies the last couple of days. Strawberries are starting to push a lot of new growth though no buds in popcorn stage yet. Fall raspberries are slowly emerging but blues are almost in bloom. Have to watch for mummyberry this year. Only 'pests' are a lot of box elder bugs that have overwintered and are hanging around the warm tomato houses. Manuring and tillage going on; first cultivation done on the redroot pigweed emerging in the scallion and beet transplants. Looks like crab grass emerging in the onions but I didn't think the ground was warm enough yet. Greenhouse sales to date are below norm, but the weather has been pretty cold and wet until recently; not inspirational for gardening or farming.

(S. Royalton) We used our new toy today for the first time; it's a paper pot transplanter from Japan. Two guys planted 30,000 onions in 3 hours. Check out paper pot transplanter on You-Tube, or the Small Farm Works website. This is a simple, really neat idea, and it works. Beats the hell out of hours and hours of kneeling in cold muddy ground sticking onions in one or two at a time.

(Hoosick Falls NY) Wet sums it up. We used a small window of 4 rain-free days to mud in some mixed vegetables, oats, and finally onions once it was dry enough to lay Biotello mulch a second time after fierce winds ripped up the first attempt. We are way behind on field work for our grain crops and many of the remaining vegetable crops. We may have to change our rotations just to get potatoes in and plastic laid for hot crops, the standing water where they are supposed to go does not look promising. Flowers are doing well but are not spread out enough due to extreme overcrowding that this year's cold spring weather has created in the greenhouse.

(Enfield NH) Feel like I am behind in everything, but we have more in the field now than the past several years. A new field with better drainage is doing well this spring. Have about an acre of greens planted: chard, kale, lettuce, etc. The rest of the fields are about half plowed, hope to fertilize and start to plant this coming week on the drier sections. Seedling greenhouse is full of transplants to go outside. Two Greenhouses still full of greens from the winter; will till under soon and plant to tomatoes. Grafted tomatoes all died; had a cheap humidity chamber, bad idea. Will fix that for next year.

(Little Compton RI) There is a new organic potato planting supplement: Soil Serenade; I just heard about it and will check its OMRI approval. We are always trying to do a better job of growing potatoes; learning a little more each year. Now we warm them up gradually and after cut them we keep them inside the barn to let them seal over for a few days before planting. It is important to not put them in the greenhouse; you lose a lot of vigor as they shrivel up and bake. Our overwintering onions are sizing up nicely. We harvested the overwintering leeks before they started to set seed. Spring markets are very weather dependent. It makes us ask whether it's worth the distraction given all the other things we need to attend to. We've already have found two marmorated stink bugs on the farm! I am worried they will be a big problem for the organic crops.

(Westminster West) Two steps forward, one step back would be a good description of the year so far. Too wet, too cold, too long! Farmers' market opened and sales were good, pent up demand and folks are happy to see us. Fields finally dry enough to work and we are about a week behind, maybe more but should catch up by weeks' end with all onions in. Garlic looks amazing and at least it's something green to look at to keep us inspired. Had a great time using our new Rain-flo bed and mulch layer yesterday. Was surprised that we were able to use a smaller than recommended HP tractor and it worked great! New tires on our 32 year-old diesel really helped. A car smashed into my delivery truck last week; the errant driver had no license or insurance! Happy I was wearing my seat belt; be prepared.

(Burlington) File this one under the misery loves company section. After two major floods in three weeks and rainy deluges in between, it's all added up to the slowest, wettest spring I can recall in nearly 20 years of growing. With climate modeling forecasting warmer air with more moisture, more snow, and more extreme events, I have to wonder if we'll see a lot more of this in the future. We threw our planned crop rotation and planting calendar out the window last week; now we're just hoping to be back on track by late June or early July. While I'm fretting about soilborne diseases, our one bright spot might be reduced crop insects since the pupae may have drowned from the flooding, though there will be mosquitoes enough to bring us misery. It's rare to wish we were on rocky upland soils, but this is one of those times. Good to see the sun, and glad we aren't any closer to Lake Champlain!

(Wolcott) This season couldn't be much different from last year. We're a month later getting on the fields and just this week will finish spreading compost and sul-po-mag. The first brassica seed crops went in this past weekend, which is just about a month later than last year. In theory that early start last year should have given us a bumper crop, but instead we got all that heat that made them bolt and go to seed too quickly, and the Rosalind broccoli made no seed at all because broccoli pollen is highly sensitive to heat. If this year continues on wet and cool we might get some broccoli seed after all, but probably not nearly as much of all the cucurbits and tomatoes. We're putting up two more 100-ft isolation cages this year for squash stock seed production, and cover-cropping a 10-acre field that we'll be able to certify and use next year. Looking forward to this week of mostly dry weather.

(Argyle NY) It finally looks like we'll have a few days of no rain and we'll be able to get on the fields soon. Still no potatoes or onions in the ground, but we're hopeful. Direct seedings in the fields under rowcover are hardly growing, but we just hooped and covered the arugula with the Biothrips netting from DuBois Agrinovation since the flea beetles are out in force! The Biothrips is easy to see and spray through and doesn't build up extra heat inside; expensive but lasts many years. Last week with one day of semi-dry fields, we transplanted out parsley, Swiss chard, and lots of lettuce and spinach before the next rains. Strawberry field is in full flower and the garlic is up over a foot. The high tunnels are producing lots of salad mix as we await the full size lettuce (behind 2 weeks). We've been picking over-wintered spinach from the fields and it looks really good for a change

(Salisbury NH) Just a few things in the ground: beets, leeks and onions. We picked up our potatoes but haven't had a chance to prep them or plant. Raised beds have some pac choi, spinach, carrots, lettuces in them. Trying to keep row covers on them but I'm beginning to hate covers since the wind wants to take them off plus it's a pain to see what's going on underneath. We also use them to keep the wild turkeys from eating everything. Hoop house is loaded with a little of everything, we need another one (or two) houses. Pac Choi and earlier spicy mesclun mix bolted already. Older lettuce overwintered ended up with aphids; pulled up right away so other plants won't be attacked. Something is still eating the Kamatsuna, assume it's an army or cutworm. Might make a good trap crop.

REBATES FOR TRACTOR ROLL BARS

Over 160 Vermont farmers have registered to install a new roll bar and seat belt kit on their tractor since the VT Rebates for Roll Bars Program started only seven months ago. That's because farmers know a good deal when they see one! The program, run by UVM Extension, offers a 70% rebate (up to \$765) to retrofit an old tractor with a new roll bar kit. Tractor rollovers are the leading cause of death and serious injury for farmers. A Roll-Over Protective Structure (ROPS = Roll Bar/Seat Belt Kit) is 99% effective in protecting tractor drivers in the event of a rollover.

Call the Vermont Rebates for Roll Bars Program at 877-767-7748 to find out which roll bar kit fits your particular tractor and how much it will cost. Call today to protect your family and workers from unnecessary harm.

SCOUT FOR LATE BLIGHT

Late blight has been found on tomatoes in a commercial greenhouse in ME and one in CT. Hopefully these will remain isolated cases but be sure to be vigilant for symptoms on your tomatoes plants and potato tubers when planting. here are links to late blight management info with pictures of symptoms on foliage and tubers:

<http://plantclinic.cornell.edu/factsheets/lateblight/late.htm>

<http://www.nysipm.cornell.edu/publications/blight/>

If at any time this season you suspect that the disease is present in any of your crops please mail or deliver a sample ASAP for professional diagnosis to your state's Extension plant pathologist so we can track the disease. In VT mail to: Ann Hazelrigg, UVM Plant Diagnostic Clinic, 201 Jeffords Building 63 Carrigan Drive, University of Vermont Burlington, VT 05405.