

## Vermont Vegetable and Berry News – May 11, 2010

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

### REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

(Royalton) Snap peas in the hoop house will be ready to eat by the end of the week; harvesting head lettuce, mesclun, mustard, arugula, spinach, kale, cilantro out of hoop houses. Field lettuce and peas out in field are doing well, despite the fact that the apple blossoms floating by the window are in fact snowflakes. Wild leeks are aplenty, as are morels and fiddleheads. Taking a chance and planting the peppers and eggplants out under row cover. Asparagus is going crazy, as is the rhubarb. The galinsoga is rearing its ugly head. Hopefully the frost will zap it.

(Plainfield) Getting ready to irrigate strawberries for overnight temps of 26 degrees. There are a few blossoms open, and many blossoms about to open, definitely not frost proof. It would be sad to lose the earliest berries. No sign of TPB or clipper yet. Kale, chard onions, leeks and a new strawberry planting out so far. Peas up, good germination for a change. Seeding winter squash and corn into plug trays in the greenhouse. Plant sales just getting started, seedlings look great.

(Westminster West) Have finished setting out 20,000 onion plants and had a nice rain to wash them in. Garlic crop looks wonderful, growing on black plastic mulch, it's thick and deep green. Seeding winter squash crop tomorrow for setting out in a few weeks, doing less pumpkins this year and more squash. Raspberries are growing well in the high tunnel but need to do a bit of thinning soon. Herb and vegetable plants have sold well but pansy sales are off a bit this year. Hanging baskets are selling well also. Our farmers market had a rainy day and sales were non-existent. Little aphid or disease pressure so far this season. Heating costs are much lower than I had projected but labor is up. Enjoying our new automated flat filling line this year; it does 1,000 trays per hour, a nice increase in efficiency. Now, if I can get the crew to actually transplant 1,000 trays per hour we will be cruising!

(S. Royalton) Everything is going great guns once I get it into the field but mice are killing me in the greenhouse. They dig up seeds and even nibble on the young sprouts. Does anyone have experience with this? They pass up traps, even when I set them with the seeds that they are eating. Asparagus is just coming in, and first direct seeding of corn in.

(Craftsbury) Soggy and cold, visions of last year are dancing in my head. The dime size hail several nights ago wasn't a lot of fun either. Thankfully most crops were under row cover. Still way ahead on planting, crew is coming together, and greenhouses are full of bounty.

(Fair Haven) Our orchard plants are in blossom 2 to 4 weeks early. Thankfully the bees have seemed to be very busy. The odd 2 days of snow between 80 degree days didn't seem to hurt anything so far. We usually hold off vegetable planting until June 1st because we don't hoop house or have cover rows. However, with the early weather we may jump ahead a few weeks if the forecast says we are clear for late frost. So that means maybe another week.

We're getting ready for first outdoor market in Rutland this week. Each year we learn more of what works for us; we have scaled down the items to lug and found collapsible display units and uniform baskets that nest to save room traveling market to market. We modified our shade awning to cope with wind and rain by making the sides more rigid.

(Salisbury NH) Our small hoop house is producing lots of product but now wish it was 4 times the size. Lettuce and bok choy beautiful and flawless--no insect damage. The radishes are also perfect. It doesn't take long to fill it up. We have raised beds plus shelving for transplants. One issue is trying to keep up with venting because we both work full time jobs off farm so it's either vent in the morning or risk things getting fried. Red potatoes in the field are up. Peas are slow to grow. Feeling overwhelmed as we expand markets; we have a restaurant to supply but didn't realize how much they use. We previously only dealt with retail customers that buy small amounts. It's nice to have the higher volume with quick sales but we're also in the dark about where to price things.

Just got crops covered for tonight's predicted low of 24 degrees. Our early varieties of strawberries are in full bloom so we put 3 covers on those and 2 covers on all the late varieties. We have a couple of test spots with 1, 2 or 3 layers of rowcover and a thermometer out there to see what works. I'll post any interesting findings. All onions and half our new strawberries are planted. Our first acre of transplanted corn is out under cover, but even with heavyweight rowcover it may be cooked by the morning. Lots of crops backing up in the greenhouse waiting to plant in the field.

(Starksboro) I'm fretting the early May frosts. I had become rather cavalier about them, and got the strawberries soundly nailed in 2009. This year I got both my peas and first sweet corn planted 5 days earlier than my previous personal best. However I'm still dragging my heels getting the last of the potatoes planted. The accumulation of growing degree days is so slow at this time of year, that I doubt any of it is going to make much difference in the end. Starting to feel the pressure to get winter rye plowed down before it explodes and needs to be measured by the board foot.

(Grand Isle) I just checked the sweet corn we planted one week ago. It has germinated! I would have bet money that in this cold weather, and being in the clay soil, it probably would be rotted. Maybe I should have taken a chance and planted some last month in that warm spell. I am definitely going to order some extra corn next year to experiment with. We tried some cucumbers 3 weeks earlier in the greenhouse; they really didn't like the cold soil, but are growing now. Mother's Day has always been the biggest asparagus harvest of the year, but this year it was a week earlier.

(Argyle, NY) Winter farmers market sales from the Saturday after Thanksgiving to April 24th increased by almost 60% from winter 2008-09. Our high tunnel of winter spinach contracted *Fusarium oxysporum* sp. *spinacea* over the winter, which we did lots of research on. As the weather warmed in March, leaves yellowed quickly, however, drenching with Root Shield and Actinovate stalled the disease and we harvested \$700/week worth of spinach until May 1st when our outside spinach was ready. This spinach-selective *Fusarium* may have come in on the seed; hot-water treating of seed is recommended, especially for crops in high tunnels. We decided to use Root Shield on all greenhouse transplants to help prevent diseases. We transition high tunnels to summer crops by interplanting tomatoes, cucumbers, summer squash and beans between the salad mix, broccoli raab, swiss chard, etc. As the winter crops dwindle, the summer crops take over.

Outside crops have progressed nicely with warm weather and rain, though we irrigated since mid-April. We use Biotello corn-starch 'plastic' and a new Buckeye water-wheel transplanter to get thousands of onions, leeks and shallots planted out. A new technique we love so far is seeding peas in the greenhouse (2 per cell in 200 cell Speedling trays) then transplanting them into Biotello. They are doing great and the earthworms (yes, really) can't eat them like they have for years, so we have beautiful stands. Annual bed strawberries look the best ever; Plant-Skydd repellent really worked to keep the deer away this winter from all the berries (blueberries, strawberries, etc.). Triple row-covers tonight for frost!

## **NEW ENGLAND VEGETABLE OR SMALL FRUIT MANAGEMENT GUIDES**

Hard copies of these updated 2010-2011 guides are available from my office for \$10 each, including postage, thanks to support from USDA Risk Management Agency. Send check payable to UVM, 11 University Way, Brattleboro VT 05301.

### **SEEDCORN MAGGOT AND WIREWORMS**

(adapted from Ruth Hazzard, in UMass Vegetable Notes)

Seed corn maggot attacks seeds, especially larger seeds like corn, beans and peas, as well as seedlings of a wide variety of plants. Eggs are laid on soil surface near sprouting or decaying seeds, organic plant residue, or organic soil amendments such as manure or seed meals. Decay from soil pathogens or previous insect feeding makes seeds or seedlings more attractive. Moist, freshly turned soil is preferred over dry or saturated soil. Eggs hatch in 2 to 9 days depending on temperature, and maggots burrow down to find food. The maggot is yellow-white, legless, with a pointed head and is about a quarter inch long when fully grown. Damage may be to the seed itself or to roots, stems or cotyledons.

The wireworm is slender, jointed, usually hard-shelled, with three pairs of legs, and tan brown in color. This is the immature stage of the click beetle, which deposit eggs on soil during May and June. Grasses, sod and sorghum-Sudangrass are favorite egg-laying sites. Eggs hatch to become wireworms that feed below-ground on seeds, roots, tubers and other plant tissue. Wireworms feed for several years before pupating and emerging as adults. A wireworm problem in the spring means there was an attractive grass crop present in the past 3 to 5 years. Wireworms prefer wet soils and moderate temperatures; they migrate up to reach warm soils, but down to avoid excessive cold, heat, or drought.

Unfortunately, practices that enhance organic matter in the soil, such as cover cropping, may actually worsen seedcorn maggot and wireworm problems. Where possible, delay crop planting for several weeks after a cover crop is incorporated to help reduce seedcorn maggot problems. Row covers over early crops will not help because both pests overwinter in soil.

If a field is infested with seedcorn maggot or wireworm, not much can be done to cure the problem except to wait and replant. Timing for replanting should be made based on assessing the size of the maggots infesting the field. If the maggots not full grown (smaller than ¼ inch long), wait 10 days to replant; if they are full grown, replant after 5 days. If wireworms are found, wait to replant until soil temperatures are above 70 degrees F, which forces them deeper into the soil.

Soil insecticide application for control of seedcorn maggot and wireworm is most effective when made prior to planting or laying plastic; however registered products are limited; see 2010-11 New England Vegetable Management Guide ([www.nevegetable.org/](http://www.nevegetable.org/)). Insecticide seed treatments, applied commercially to the seed, also target these pests and reduce damage. Using transplants avoids these pests except where plants are set under row cover or in areas that are already heavily infested.

### **SUBSCRIBE TO UMASS VEGETABLE NOTES**

UMass Extension produces Veg Notes, an excellent vegetable newsletter full of timely crop and pest information during the growing season (like the article above). There is much more detail, including color photos, and advice on specific materials for pest management, than you'll find in this Vermont newsletter. Veg Notes are available free of charge by e-mail, sent weekly as a pdf or for \$40/year the hard copy will be mailed to you, see: <http://www.umassvegetable.org/newsletters/subscribe.html>.

### **NEW MATERIAL LABELED FOR CROW DAMAGE TO CORN SEEDLINGS**

(Jeff Carter, UVM Extension)

Avipel bird repellent has been approved for use in Vermont for this planting season for field corn and sweet corn. This is a new hopper box treatment for corn to stop birds from pulling up sprouted corn seed. It tastes really bad to a crow. One packet treats 1 unit of corn seed, 1 case covers 125 acres. The product also comes as a liquid, but not as easy to treat at planting time. The Agency of Agriculture processed a Section 18 label to allow its use in Vermont. The product is available through Helena Chemical or Agriliance. They can have product here within a week. I'd like to track Avipel use and effectiveness to get EPA approval for next year. Please let me know if you use this product and how well it works, thanks. 388-4969 or [jecarter@uvm.edu](mailto:jecarter@uvm.edu).