



Vermont Vegetable and Berry News – May 22, 2012
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REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

(Royalton) Rhubarb is in full swing, having to dead head flowers daily. Strawberries are blossoming, and we dodged a frost one recent night. Asparagus is really going well, in its fourth year of production. Already seeing asparagus beetle damage. Peas are four or five inches high. Garlic really took off in the last rainy period, as did the pastures. Headed toward a long stretch of hot weather, so will plant corn today. We've had bad crow problems in the past, so hopefully we can avoid that. Still harvesting wild crops: morels, nettles and ramps.

(Warren) We are finally getting caught up after the wet spring. Things are looking good and market potential is strong. Farm store sales are good considering the limited selection. We are 2 weeks away from carrots, tomatoes, scallions, pearl onions, snap peas and strawberries. That will definitely help fill the shelves. Strawberries are a little later this year despite doing Chandler instead of Seascape. We are seeing the results of 3 years of obsessive weed control. I'm happy to look into June without having to sweat weeding too much. We added a bunch of sulfur and Solubor to our compost last winter and are anxious to see the results when it comes to crops like onions and beets. Germination on the early beet seedings seems to represent the amount of seeds that went into the ground for a change.

(Middle Granville NY) Season going well so far, dodging the rain to get stuff in. Onions in and growing, potatoes in although not up yet. Spring field greens going strong, because of last year's flooding of our root veggies having to rely more on the spring greens. A few new varieties going well. Suiho Chinese kale from Johnny's super tasty and exciting but seems a little low yielding- will give a more complete report after we've totaled up the yields. Hay fields pretty poor looking so far- we're ready to mow straw by this weekend- yield nowhere near last years.

(Rochester) Several frosty nights caused some damage to fully open blueberry blossoms but the damage appears only to be scattered. The temperatures must have been hovering right at the critical point. We recorded 27 degrees one night which should have caused more destruction than it appears to have. The damage was worst in the Patriots which are our earliest to flower, but quite minor in the later-blooming varieties in which we have excellent bloom. It remains to be seen whether the frosts have caused structural damage in the raspberries. Pollinators are very numerous, presumably due to the mild winter, and some fruit has already set. Of course, for the same reason we will likely get plenty of bugs that are not friendly--already we have seen hoplia beetles which I understand are fairly new to Vermont. They feed on the blossoms, but the numbers are modest. Overall we are upbeat about the likely fruit set and are hopeful of a good yield this year.

(Wolcott) Laying plastic like crazy, getting out all the sweet corn and hopefully some butternuts. Weeding the perennial onions. We're up to full crew and swinging into full gear. Hoping it doesn't get crazy hot in the next few weeks so the Brassica seed crops don't bolt too early.

(Plainfield NH) Hopefully frost is over. Broken sleep makes it hard to function the following day. Wildly fluctuating temps and moisture have been hard on the strawberry crop this year. It could be nutritional, but petioles are shorter than they should be at this stage of bloom and we should be further along in bloom. Two weeks ago we looked for Asian Garden Beetle larvae which have raised havoc with roots of some of our plantings, but the soil was too cold and they were still down too deep. Varieties seem weird, with Cabot in full bloom and Cavendish and Jewel at 10%. I thought this would get easier as I got older... We avoided the onion maggots, but had been watering transplants in the greenhouse with *Steinernema feltiae* nematode routinely, perhaps that helps? Blueberries look good. Will start cleaning up the berry beds as the college kids trickle in. First planting of melons, cukes, field tomatoes, squash and corn are in. Seeing high populations of flea beetle, haven't actually checked the cole crops for root maggot, although didn't put any out early and put them on sandiest soil.

(Little Compton RI) We are hearing of root maggot problems all around us. The first flight missed us but we'll be really for flight number two by getting some nematodes to drench our last onion and leek transplants. Two hundred is cheap money when you look at two acres. We have had seven inches of rain of late and so are a bit behind. At least parsnips are coming up like they finally should. We had a small disaster that turned into a valuable teaching experience. Yesterday when the sun finally showed up all our greenhouse fans were cranking and then suddenly, they all stopped. I quickly traced it back to the main feed panel feeding all the greenhouses! A hundred-amp breaker had over heated. We had no spare!

I quickly got a replacement just in time. But upon inspection of the rest of the breakers, especially the ones running the furnaces, I noticed they were close to failing as well. My electrician said that with heavy use breakers will only be good for eight years. All these were eighteen plus! Do yourself a favor and replace your heavy use breakers and keep track of their age. It will save you some headaches and may keep you barn from burning down!

(Salisbury NH) Weather has improved a little. Put tomato transplants in this weekend. Space spinach planted outside 10 days ago is slow to germinate. Hoophouse new plantings of spinach and lettuce very quick to grow. Overwintered spinach is about to be pulled up. Walla Wall and Red Zeppelin onions planted mostly in raised beds look great. Red Norland potatoes planted several weeks have nice growth finally. Our pepper and eggplant transplants we started from seed got a bad case of aphids from being placed in the hoophouse during the day and the aphids overwintered too. Hoping to open next weekend. We have regular customers that come now but don't want to hang the open sign until supplies are greater.

(Argyle NY) We started picking strawberries May 16th, earliest ever and the same day we got hit with hail which wasn't severe but still damaged lots of greens and even dented all the rhubarb. Hoping the damage to onions doesn't start diseases; time for a copper preventative. The onion plants and sets planted in December and January in a low tunnel are starting to bulb and look nice; we are selling the last of our storage Copra and Patterson onions so timing should be good to keep customers in onions almost continuously year-round. High tunnels are being switched over to summer production with bean, summer squash, tomato and cucumber transplants going in as the last of the greens are coming out. Downy mildew came into the tunnel on certain varieties of the head lettuce and it hasn't changed after a spray of Cease. We don't think we've ever seen flea beetles so plentiful before; even the tunnel arugula has been destroyed when the covers got wind-blown a little. Some garlic starting to send up scapes. Trials this winter with 24 varieties of spinach in the tunnel went well and I'll be posting results when I find time to enter data. That spinach tunnel had *Fusarium spinacea* throughout it 2 years ago, and no disease at all this winter, which we attribute to drenches of Root Shield Plus (RSSI) and Actinovate (done with assistance of BioWorks which produces RSSI). We are doing more trials with biological controls this summer, as well as some Nutrient Dense grant work. Planting, transplanting, cultivating, seeding, and irrigating-in tunnels! Farmers' market sales remain steady each week and our 6 month average of winter market sales surpassed the summer average by \$20. Amazing, and winter labor was about 1/3 that of summer.

(Grand Isle) As part of a UVM Extension trial funded by NRCS I am experimenting with zone tillage. First I used a 10 foot roller-crimper filled up with water, going up and down over a field of rye, row for row, rolling 6 feet of the width, which meant that 4 feet rolled back over the previous row. For the last few rows, I used our 12 foot cultipacker, which did almost as good a job. Then I used the zone tiller, modified to do a single row, right in the middle of the 6 foot swath. It opened up a nice slit, without damaging the ground cover. I am trying to get the squash and pumpkins planted, but having technical difficulty of the third kind (old equipment).

VERMONT DIRECT MARKET PRODUCE PRICE REPORTS

With help from growers the first direct market produce price report of 2012 is posted at www.uvm.edu/farmpricing/ and also www.uvm.edu/vtvegandberry/ProducePriceReports.html We depend on your participation to make this program effective so please register to become a price reporter this season at www.uvm.edu/farmpricing/user/register

GET READY FOR CORN BORERS

(from UMass Veg Notes)

Vermont growers take note that active feeding by European Corn Borer is predicted in Western MA in a week or two (depending on GDD accumulation) and in the warmer parts of the state flight of overwintering ECB has started. In cooler parts of the state, flight will likely begin this week. We will not be far behind. Some growers are using the biocontrol *Trichogramma ostriniae*, a tiny wasp that lays its eggs in ECB eggs. Timing is key, once ECB eggs hatch it's too late. To use *Trichogramma* you must plan ahead and order them when planting your sweet corn, as this beneficial is produced on demand. Contact IPM Laboratories at 315-497-2063 or ipminfo@ipmlabs.com. The ideal time to release the wasps is when ECB eggs are in the field, but not hatched. To be conservative, release the wasps the week that ECB flight begins as the additional GDDs needed for egg laying will very likely accumulate within that week. More information on using *T. ostriniae* can be found in the April 24 issue of UMass Vegetable Notes, see: <http://extension.umass.edu/vegetable/publications/vegetable-notes-newsletter/archives>. For images of ECB eggs larvae and adults, as well as description of scouting and monitoring procedures, see <http://umaine.edu/ipm/ipddl/publications/5101e/>.