

# Vermont Vegetable and Berry News – May 25, 2010

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

## REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

(Moretown) The first pest of the season reared its ugly head on my farm already. Onion Maggots seem to have begun to dine on my Cortlands. The beautiful garlic is in the next bed and I am a bit nervous that they will make their way into that. On a brighter note, the Sugar Snaps are 6 inches high and the field cilantro is 3 inches and growing by the day. The Red Norlands have popped up through the soil. Tunnel tomatoes are in and happy.

(Montpelier) Packing shed is set up for summer business. CSA starts next week. A lot of sun and heat in the forecast over the next few days should really make a lot of summer crops jump and a lot of salad and greens bolt. Flea beetles are dining well in some salad mix out in the field. Asparagus has been very confused with the hot, cold, hot. All in all things looking real good. Cucumbers are setting fruit, tomatoes are taking off. Field planting is going to start in earnest this week with plastic and row cover at the ready. Ravens have discovered the corn but no sign of woodchucks. Deer getting a bit braver as things go in. Aphids under control with green lacewings. White button and crimini mushrooms popping up all over the place in the greenhouse. Great interplanted third crop for market.

(Killington) 2010 is shaping up to be a great year; sales are up; picking mixed greens for our rest for six weeks. Garlic, kale, onions and spinach are doing great; broccoli and parsley transplants went in the ground. Rolling the dice in the mountains by planting stringbeans May 22. Tomatoes are loaded with small fruit, the greenhouse soil test helps. Meat and egg sales are stronger than 2009.

(S. Royalton) Direct seeded corn is up and has 4 leaves, melons, toms, cukes, zukes and sweet potatoes in the ground. Nothing grew the week before but things are moving now. As always, I've got a good feeling about this season. Asparagus beetle adults are gnawing on the shoots, a behavior I have never seen before.

(Burlington) Things are moving along nicely now, and we are looking forward to seeing how rotation distance helps us with a few of our problem pests. Last year we leased another field 1/2 mile from our main production area, with intervening wetlands and hedgerows. We grew potatoes there in 2009, and the additional distance and barriers really helped out with CPB control. This year the spuds will return to our main field, and we'll see what it does to our overwintering population. Hoping to limit our use of spinosad again, as we successfully did in 2009, as it seems like resistance may be developing in our population. Looking at neem, pyrethrum, and Beauveria blends for consideration, possibly combined with one early hand picking of adults.

We're also looking to rotation to help with our increasing Swede Midge problem. In 2009 we lost the entirety of our 7/1 transplanting of broccoli to Swede Midge damage, 50% of our 7/14 planting, 20% of our 7/28 planting, and 5% of our 8/3 planting. While we harvested tolerable fall cabbage and Brussels Sprouts, we think that they may have also been affected. Yikes!

Swede Midge are known to be weak fliers, though, so distance and barriers appear to be the only successful organic management strategies aside from foregoing Brassicas for large portions of the season, which wouldn't work so well for our CSA.

We also played around with burning our own winter rye seed from 2009 through our LDJ corn furnace in the greenhouse this spring, with mixed results. Our grain wasn't as dry as it could have been, so between that and the smaller particle size, we had some combustion issues. That said, it was pretty cool to be growing our own fuel and having a use for some poor germ seed. I think if we get it dry it would work pretty well in blends of up to 25% with shell corn and/or wood pellets.

(Wolcott) This hot, dry weather is an unexpected treat, but means we have to be a little careful with planting this week because we don't have any irrigation in most of the fields. It's great weather for cultivating all the Brassica seed crops, though. They're all looking great so far. A few plants have died in the Rosalind broccoli field but we can't see any cabbage maggots on the roots yet, so trying to figure out whether to try to side-dress with nematodes. We've recently worked out arrangements for two new fields that will mean new isolations for seed crops, which we're pretty psyched about – isolations have always been tight for most of the squashes and now they've also become tight for corn and for the Brassica rapa crops. We're putting up two new 100-ft long pollination cages this year for doing more small stock seed productions – mostly of acorn squashes and some of those B. rapa salad greens. As our seed productions get bigger it means we need much bigger quantities of stock seed – up to 12 lbs of squash seed in some cases - so we're having to do special productions for those.

(Argyle NY) We are now in full irrigation mode as most rains have missed us. The farmers' markets are in a higher gear than any other May, and fortunately, we have a lot of greens and root cellar produce to meet demand. The high tunnels are nearly stripped of the last greens with the Happy Rich (miniature broccoli from Johnny's) still producing well and being popular with the customers. One tunnel is now mostly planted with the summer crops and the other will be planted with sweet potatoes the first week of June.

Our strawberries, Chandler variety planted in the California annual bed system as plugs in September, started producing on May 21st and will be in full production by the end of the week, esp. with the heat; they look great this year so far. We have been transplanting out like crazy and will start chopping our hay fields and rye fields tomorrow (with our Gehl flailchopper) in order to lay mulch down between the rows of black plastic. The orchard survived the frosts and it is now white after being coated with Surround (kaolin clay) to protect it from insects.

(Rochester) Frosts on May 10 and 12 caused some losses in our Patriot blueberries which were largely in open blossom. Our other blueberry varieties were in earlier stages and seemed to have escaped damage completely. We recorded temperatures of 21.3° near the ground and 23.6° in the middle of the bushes, but somehow we avoided widespread destruction. There was little visible frost so perhaps the lack of water content in the air reduced the damage. Damage was greatest on branches extending into the rows, so clearly there was extra warmth within the bush. Our attempts to apply row covers in gusty winds on high bush plants proved to be futile.

Since those two anxious nights we have had perfect weather for pollination and the number of bees at work is astonishing--I have counted up to seven bumblebees per bush at any one time along with 6-10 honeybees and various mason bees. It is loud in those rows!

In our raspberry patch, the Taylors appears to be dying back, perhaps due to vascular damage on those cold nights--they are aging and at the coldest end of the farm. Now it is very dry. We are watering constantly, and pleased to have extended our drip system this spring so that it serves all the blueberries and raspberries. We could use some rain for the sake of the blackberries and cherries.

(Plainfield) Strawberries starting to recover from frost damage. Nice to see lots of blossoms with white centers again. Few clippers, no TPB yet. Will water this week to keep the berries filling out and to encourage the blooming. Hope for a rain before plastic mulch laying later this week. Young peppers and eggplants look great. Full greenhouse of cherry and grape tomatoes that have set. Plant sales have been solid, nice to be able to pay some bills. Kale planting is well established, ready for a flea beetle spray. Preparing ground for corn transplants and carrot seeding. No June frost, please!

(Anonymous) We are dealing with an outbreak of downy mildew on our lettuce seedlings in our propagation house. I am reading conflicting information about whether or not DM is seed borne. We have always had a little DM in the fall and have switched over to as many DM resistant varieties as possible, with varieties resistant to as many different strains as we can get. This March we started seeing the DM on early lettuce mesclun (even on DM resistant varieties) in our high tunnels and pulled the plants asap. I have never seen it in our prop. house before. Anybody have any experience with this? (editor's note: please reply to Vern with your answers, thanks.)The weather continues to be a surprise with things simultaneously being ahead of schedule and also not growing.

## **LATE BLIGHT NEWS**

Two isolated cases of late blight were recently confirmed in greenhouses in Pennsylvania and Maryland. Hopefully the spores will not spread from there, but growers need to be vigilant, especially if the weather turns cool and wet. It is also possible that some home gardeners will allow infected potatoes from last year to grow without destroying them in a timely fashion, adding to the threat of late blight.

In a nutshell here are steps to take to prevent late blight. 1) Familiarize yourself with symptoms of the disease through descriptions and web sites. 2) Carefully examine all tomato transplants and potato tubers before you plant them, destroying any that show signs of the disease. 3) Keep a very close eye on these crops for late blight symptoms as they grow. 4) Be prepared to protect tomato and potato crops against infection by spraying preventative fungicides, organic or conventional, should late blight be reported closer to our area. Organic growers can use NuCop 50WP or Champ WG as they are OMRI approved and registered in Vermont. Conventional growers should consult the New England Vegetable Management Guide at: <http://www.nevegetable.org>. 5) Immediately destroy plants if they become infected with late blight. 6) Keep looking for and immediately destroy any 'volunteer' potatoes that sprout in last year's potato field.

For more information on Late Blight, including many pictures of the symptoms, see: <http://www.hort.cornell.edu/lateblight> and also <http://www.umassvegetable.org/LateBlightAlertforTomatoandPotato.html>. In addition you may be interested in a map of late blight risk level based on a predictive model for the disease, available at: [http://uspest.org/risk/tom\\_pot\\_map](http://uspest.org/risk/tom_pot_map).

## **JUNE ON-FARM WORKSHOPS**

These events are sponsored by the VT Vegetable & Berry Growers Association, NOFA-VT and UVM Extension with support from Risk Management Agency (RMA) which provides risk management and financial tools to Vermont's farmers with information through education and outreach programs. More information is at: <http://www.rma.usda.gov>. Registration is free for VV&BGA members and VOF certified farmers, \$10 for NOFA members and apprentices, \$15 for others.

### **June 7th, 3-5pm, IPM for Organic Greenhouse Bedding Plants**

Red Wagon Plants in Hinesburg, VT.

Margaret Skinner, Entomologist from the UVM Entomology Research Laboratory, and Vern Grubinger, UVM Extension vegetable and berry specialist lead a discussion on scouting procedures, pest identification, and use of bio-rational greenhouse IPM strategies for managing pests on organic bedding plants. They team up with Julie Rubaud of Red Wagon Plants, who relies on biological controls and cultural practices to manage pests and diseases. Julie sells certified organic vegetable transplants, herb plants, annual flowers and perennials for retail sales at her farm in Hinesburg and at many retail outlets in the surrounding area. All participants will receive a copy of the "Greenhouse Manager's Guide to Integrated Pest Management."

*Directions: In Hinesburg at the intersection of VT Route 116, CVU Road and Shelburne Falls Rd, take Shelburne Falls Rd for 2.5 miles. Look for 4 greenhouses on the right. Please park in the lot.*

<http://www.mapquest.com/mq/3-Or6N>

### **June 16th, 5-7pm. Sweet Corn Timing, Fertility and Tillage.**

Lewis Creek Farm, Starksboro, VT

Hank Bissell has been growing vegetables and berries on Lewis Creek Farm using sustainable methods for 29 years. During this time he has developed a way to schedule sweet corn planting. Hank says: "It's an easy and intuitive method of timing sweet corn plantings, so they don't all ripen at once." He will show how he uses the growth and development of corn plants in his fields to determine planting dates for his different blocks of corn. Hank uses the Pre-Sidedress Nitrate Test (PSNT) to determine if his corn has enough nitrogen and cover crops are an important part of his rotation. This year he is comparing sweet corn planted in a deep zone tillage system that Vern Grubinger and Sue Hawkins of the UVM Extension Vegetable and Berry Program have been trialing in the state, with funding from NRCS. A farm tour will follow. All participants will receive a copy of the DVD "Growers and their Ecological Sweet Corn Production Practices."

*Directions: Take VT Route 116 to the village of Starksboro. In the center of the village look for the farm on the west side of the road. Park at the farmstand.* <http://users.gmavt.net/lcfarm/maplcf.htm>

**Upcoming meetings in the region**, see: <http://www.uvm.edu/vtvegandberry/meetings/meetlist.html> for details to be posted soon, but mark your calendars now.

Organic Strawberry, Blueberry and Raspberry Production. Adam's Berry Farm, Burlington VT. 5 pm July 21, 2010.

Hands-On Vegetable IPM Workshop. Hurricane Flats Farm, S. Royalton VT. 4 pm August 26, 2010.

Practices to Promote Fresh Produce Food Safety for Direct Markets. Cedar Circle Farm, E. Thetford VT. 5 pm Sept. 8, 2010.

High Tunnel Construction with Ed Person, Ledgewood Farm Greenhouse Frames. Edgewater Farm, Plainfield NH. 5 pm Sept 14, 2010.

GAPs on a Wholesale/Retail Vegetable Farm. Paul Mazza's Fruits and Vegetables, Essex VT. 5 pm Sept. 22, 2010.

Root Vegetable Production and Storage. Blackwell Roots Farm, Cabot VT. 3 pm Oct. 25, 2010.