



VERMONT VEGETABLE AND BERRY GROWER NEWS – May 3, 2022

Compiled by Vern Grubinger, University of Vermont Extension

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

(802) 257-7967 ext. 303, vernon.grubinger@uvm.edu

REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

(Ely) Despite a long, cold, cloudy April, we're getting a good start on field work. Cleaned up several leftover beds of fall harvested crops and dead pea/oat plantings with a light tilling followed by Perfecta passes. Planning to start the season with some serious Caliente mustard seedings early before later crops. Already seeded two 1/2-acre pieces and plan several more. I think this mustard is a game changer and will report back results. Been trying to prepare and maintain stale seedbeds way ahead of planting to try and exhaust surface weed populations.

This past week we picked several hundred pounds of over-wintered spinach from a 1/3 acre planted in mid and later October, with a lot more to come. Best and earliest I've ever had! No winter kill and the perfect size: thumb sized true leaves and some even smaller. If it's any bigger there is too much sorting out old leaves. No cover over winter but put one on early when we had a cold snap in late March. Had to take it off later to avoid abrasion from cover. Planted first spring spinach and into fall-prepared beds on March 26th (my birthday), and it came up beautifully. Flamed all beds just before it came up. Been planting spinach again every five days and have now added cilantro.

Got PTO pump into Connecticut River; flushed header and laterals; and ran one full 500' lateral on new plantings. Everything worked perfectly! First time ever, and no blowouts or dead skunks in the 5" lines... also a first. Seems like a good start for a good year!

(Westminster) We've got transplants of kale, collards, cabbage, and lettuce in the ground. Our new transplanter has been working well. It plants four rows at a time but requires only two people working it, so that's much more efficient. We've covered them all with Remy to warm up the soil and push them along and, for the brassicas, to protect them from flea beetle. The first of the sweet corn transplants will go in the ground soon; they'll also be covered with Remy. We grow all of our sweet corn from transplants now.

We're packing out the last of our stored root crops, with just some carrots and purple daikon left from last season. And we've started cutting field spinach that we planted last fall and overwintered. Most of that will go to the farmstand, which opens April 30. We welcome back our Jamaican H2-A workers May 1. We're hiring a few more of those guys this year since local help has been hard to find. Other than that -- bring on the warmth...It's been cold and windy!

(Hyde Park) Cold and wet spring here. The snow has been gone here but the fields are taking their sweet time drying out. I had already been seeding for almost 2 weeks by this time last year. But it looks like some dry, warmer weather is on the way this week.

Garlic looks really good this year. I took a chance and didn't mulch or cover it at all this winter and it seems to have done well. Our typical heavy snow load is insulation enough even though we had relatively very little snow this year.

Tunnel crops are doing well, and some are finishing up/being pulled for summer crop prep. A red Russian kale paper-pot transplanted experiment came out last week after doing very well. It looked sad in January, and I almost gave up on it. However, it bounced back very well in February, and I was able to get three cuts on those beds. Chickweed is slowly becoming a problem in the houses. Spinach is going strong but some of the transplanted crops are very slow this year. I planted some brassicas like bok choy and kale a full month earlier than last year and saw no benefit. Although this spring has been much cloudier and colder than last year.

On May 1 was just able to start bed prep in some drier fields. With the sun today it's time to start weeding for real. Drank a beer laying in the grass after work today; felt good. Spring is here!

(W. Rutland) Well, it's been a rainin' damn near all April. Cover crops love it, plows and tractors don't. Been so cold even the garlic and hop plants seem to wanna git back down undah. Very slow start here. Hoping to start catching up soon.

(Guildhall) Finally getting a spell of dry weather, and enough time away from trucking potatoes to start tillage on April 30. Hopefully we'll be able to start tilling in earnest around May 10 when the schedule loosens a bit. We've added a lot of new leased land; some hay ground to plow, some out of hay only one year, some weedy cropland. All told we've probably got 125 acres to work this spring despite only planting our usual 50ish acres of potatoes. Bigger equipment is something to look forward to, one day. We'll plant 2 acres of early chippers, 1 acre early whites, and 5 acres of reds early next week. The rest of the spuds we'll get to when we get to 'em. Everything's going smoothly, aside from fertilizer and diesel prices.

(Plainfield NH) We have had a great deal of trouble acquiring labor for the field, thus we have been struggling to keep up with the season in a timely fashion and the fine details often get pushed aside. I refer to this as "guerilla farming" or farming in "shotgun mode". The department of labor hasn't been helpful either in that our H2A Jamaicans have finally arrived, albeit 2 weeks late, for which we haven't been given any viable excuse as to the hold up. Nonetheless, tomato greenhouses are planted, beets and carrots in the ground and the strawberries uncovered and fertilized. The colder than normal temperatures have been accompanied with blustery winds drying out our soils, so laying plastic and drip tape is on hold.

Thankfully, the new cooler for the farmstand has arrived, which we were very anxious about because there were concerns about lack of labor on the manufacturing end and problems on the trucking end. Retail greenhouse season has begun for us with a trickle of folks picking up pansies and perennials, it a welcome thing to have the cash spigot opening up again as farm inputs have skyrocketed and pushed the annual operating loan upward. Hoping to get corn and potatoes in the ground this week, and continue with spraying activities as the weather (and machinery functions) allow.

(Argyle NY) Spring temperatures up and down, and mostly very dry. We now have irrigation set up and running on the whole farm which was critically needed. We are late with seeding some spring crops, but with the snow in early April and 30's at night for many days, they will catch up for sure! Winter crops in the tunnels are maturing and being ripped out as we make space for summer crops. Celery has been planted in the tunnels, and over the next week, many more crops will go in the tunnels like broccolini, peppers, eggplants, tomatoes, cucumbers, etc.

Our winter spinach tunnel is showing signs of Fusarium, even with hot water treated seed. We will drench with Rootshield Plus and post results next time, but it worked back in 2008 when we had it. Our trial sugar snap peas are growing in the tunnel on Hortonova fencing and doing well; the outside plantings are not very thick likely due to cold soil. Fungus gnats have continued to challenge us in our greenhouse, with much damage to our ginger recently... using beneficial nematodes for control that helps if done consistently.

Onions and leeks are being planted outside this week, along with Swiss chard. The lettuce marches across the fields with the other weekly direct seedings of greens. Scallions from oversized onion sets we got as trials last fall have been a huge success for us. So easy to plant, grow, clean up and market. We plant them every 2 weeks for continuous supply (tunnels in the late fall, then move outside in spring).

We have a great crew for the first time since Covid and our online store is doing well, with a farmers' market thrown in 1-2 times each month to soak up the surplus. Trying to slow the farm down a bit, depend on workers more, and take a few vacations this summer!

(Salisbury NH) So cold and windy it is discouraging. However, peas planted outside are up a few inches and have survived uncovered. Lettuce is okay with cold but not much growth. Spinach is already being eaten in the hoop houses. Something nipped off one tomato plant at the stem and in another hoop house a couple branches were cut off. Arugula that overwintered was fast growing.

Unfortunately I am not open yet. Lettuce is almost ready (in unseated hoop houses). Finding lots of sporadic germination on lots of direct seeded items like radishes chard spinach and beets. Wondering if the soil has an issue or if ants might be carrying them off. Pelletized carrots don't seem to have the same problem. Running a trial comparing some of my spinach. Tasman (left over seeds) Auroch, Lizard, and Space. Auroch from last year left in field seems to be starting to grow again. Hoping to be open in two weeks.

POLLINATOR PROGRAM UPDATES

Laura Johnson, UVM Extension Pollinator Support Specialist

Check out these new resources on the UVM Extension [pollinator support web site](#)

Self-report pollinators counts on your farm this spring!

Want to participate and share spring pollinator observations in your blooming blueberries, apples, or other spring crop? Wondering what pollinator activity is looking like on other farms besides yours? Consider using this [data sheet](#) for monitoring pollinators in the field and [this google forms link](#) to submit your observations. Each includes instructions for pollinator monitoring in your crop. We will compile and share the results of your reports.

Commercial bumble bees in highbush blueberries: FAQs.

Considering ordering bumble bees for blueberry pollination services? Maybe you put your order in already and aren't sure what to expect? Or maybe you are familiar with using commercial bumble bees for pollination services and you want to provide suggestions for this new resource? Check out [Using Commercially Reared Bumble Bees for Northern Highbush Blueberry Pollination Services: FAQs](#)

Pollination guide for highbush blueberries in VT

[This publication](#) describes blueberry floral morphology, bee species efficiency and preferences, and tips on spring bee activity.

Questions, comments, suggestions? Contact laura.o.johnson@uvm.edu.

LEEK MOTH UPDATE

Scott Lewins, Entomologist, UVM Extension and P&SS Dept.

The first leek moth flight of the season has started, and they will begin mating and laying eggs on overwintering garlic and other alliums as they are planted this spring. Typically, this first flight doesn't result in significant damage, though newly transplanted alliums as well as garlic scapes can be disproportionately affected because of the timing of the resulting first larval generation. Management options include exclusion with row cover and chemical controls. Covering plants with row cover at night will exclude the nocturnal female moths from laying eggs. Where this is not feasible or cost effective, chemical controls can be applied. Spinosad (Entrust, organic) and spinetoram (Radiant SC, conventional) have been shown to be effective chemical controls but must be time timed appropriately. For more information about leek moth, see <https://nysipm.cornell.edu/agriculture/vegetables/leek-moth-information-center>. Questions? contact Vic Izzo (vizzo@uvm.edu) and/or Scott Lewins (slewins@uvm.edu).

SPOTTED LANTERNFLY WEBINAR MAY 5

Judy Rosovsky, State Entomologist, VAAFAM

VAAFAM is providing a live webinar on spotted lanternfly on May 5 at 11:00 am specifically for the nursery and landscaping industry but helpful for all veg and berry growers. The Vermont and New Hampshire state entomologists will be available to answer your questions and make recommendations for management. Please sign up to participate by filling out a registration form at <https://forms.office.com/g/rFGRGKLMV3>

FARMER-TO-FARMER BUSINESS DISCUSSION GROUP

The Farmer Peer-to-Peer Discussion group is a place to increase basic business management skills, discuss business needs and share ideas. It's a FREE 12-month program for qualifying Vermont farms. The group meets for 4-hours each month, beginning this month. You must have a value-added/retail component to your farm and meet a few other requirements. Waivers of the eligibility requirements may be requested. See this [flyer](#) for details, complete an initial [intake form](#) or contact betsy.miller@uvm.edu to for an application or to learn more.

The group will explore business skills including financial management, sales, staffing issues, planning, operational efficiencies, market analysis, relationship building, new market opportunities, and succession planning. Meetings will be facilitated by Rose Wilson, agricultural enterprises consultant, and Betsy Miller UVM Extension Agricultural Business Educator. Discussions will be confidential. Visit the [Agricultural Business](#) website to learn more about our programs and services.

JOIN THE VERMONT NURSERY AND LANDSCAPE ASSOCIATION (VNLA)

Kristina MacKulin, VNLA Executive Director

The VNLA is a trade association of retail and wholesale growers, garden centers, landscape designers, contractors, and educators dedicated to promoting the horticultural industry in Vermont. It offers a variety of programs, educational opportunities, industry news updates, a quarterly publication, and access to a network of people dedicated to horticulture in Vermont. We invite VVBGA members to join VNLA. Learn more about becoming a member here: <https://vnlavt.org/membership/benefits-of-membership/>. The VNLA also produces the Vermont Flower Show, which has been on hiatus due to the pandemic. It will resume March 3-5, 2023 at the Champlain Valley Expo. We invite you to consider being an exhibitor! Learn more at: <https://vnlavt.org/vermont-flower-show/exhibitors/>

REMEMBERING IVA LEIBIG

Iva Liebig of W. Pawlett, Vermont, recently passed away at 95 years of age. She and her husband Phil started [Leibig's Berries](#) with a hand-planted acre of strawberries in Granville NY in 1965, purchasing their nearby Pawlett farm in the early 1980's. At its peak the farm had 25 acres of berries. Iva was involved in the farm operations into her 90's. She was an active member of the Vermont Vegetable and Berry Growers Association (initially known as the Small Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association) during its formative years.