



VERMONT VEGETABLE AND BERRY GROWER NEWS – May 4, 2021

Compiled by Vern Grubinger, University of Vermont Extension

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

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REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

(Burlington) Amazing winter greens this year. With the mild, cooler spring the spinach, lettuce, and parsley are continuing to grow abundantly while holding quality. Loving our new flat ground mulch layer, thanks to Bob Pomykala. We have a Rainflow model 2600 raised bed mulch layer which we modified on Bob's suggestion so we can make flat beds as well. Sure nice to have one implement do the work of two! Spring crops are getting in on schedule, with a nice showery weather pattern that makes our cool season transplants happy. We're considering how we will modify our on-farm distribution for our summer CSA that starts in June, looking to balance safety, requirements, and the membership interest in socializing and hanging out. The whole staff is looking forward to dispensing with the bagging and bunching we instituted for many crops in 2020, when we get to that point in the summer.

(Guildhall) Nice weather in early April allowed us to get thru better than half our tillage. Rain, snow etc. have stalled things as of late, but we've been wrenching a bit. This week, rain allowing, we'll be spreading sul-po-mag, and start planting spuds. We bought some fertilizer trucks with augers this spring, and I'm hoping they make for a faster planting season with less wasted fertilizer. Putting down 400# of calcium to the acre to combat hollow heart, mixed right in with the fert.

(Pownal) Blueberry Fields of Vermont. Many hours of prep work done. Weeding all blueberries and raspberries with fertilizing completed. When weeding, paying attention for mummyberry, none found yet. Will cultivate again around blueberries to destroy mummyberry mushrooms and try to prevent any damage. Placing post system in newly planted raspberries for netting latter in June. Will be planting 100 new blackberries in May. Also ready to prepare the two large gardens for May planting for our sweet corn and pumpkin sales. It could warm up any time. Our English Setters are enjoying the return to outside life.

(Winchester NH) Picadilly Farm. Fields dried out sooner than usual, but a decent amount of rain now and then has been good for germination. Seed corn maggots decimated our pea seeding so now we're trying a follow up with transplants. Doing trials with a new set of Wizard vacuum seeders to see if we can do better than the Jang seeders in our quest for the perfect carrot stand. CSA shares sold out in April, which is earliest ever for us.

(Argyle NY) April started out with warmth and promise and then fell into a normal month of ups and downs. Plantings outside are progressing well but this week will be a little bit of a dance with the rains. No flea beetles or diseases to report outside yet but in the tunnels we have had our share this winter/ spring. We had some aphids last year but this spring was worse. That warm spell in early April brought out the hover flies and quickly squelched them. Unfortunately, a lot of leaves were left unpickable and plants were stunted but luckily another tunnel was ready with salad mix. Then suddenly an explosive hatch of slugs went to town everywhere. Haven't seen that in years. Cladisporium came in on the spinach so noting which varieties are more resistant (we have 17 varieties planted). The gray aphids are on the overwintered kale but no way to control them. Other than that sales are good and we still have plenty of produce! Overwintered onions and the garlic look great, little shy of help right now but have a few people calling.

(Salisbury NH) Feeling like wind has been the dominant factor this year. Put tarp down, it blows up. Add more weights and blows up again. Trying to add more areas of no till. Those from last year had tons of worms and seemed more productive. Noticing some seeds are not germinating well - even when they are brand new. (Sweet Red Carmen for one). This will be our first year using Proteknet. In addition to exclusion, we can also see if something might have gotten on plants. Even though it's been cold (and did we mention windy?) there were tons of small bees on our Stanley plum which is flowering profusely. Not sure what type--maybe Mason bees?

UPDATE FROM THE UVM PLANT DIAGNOSTIC CLINIC

Ann Hazelrigg, Extension Plant Pathologist

Diseases in high tunnels at this time of year are typically abiotic (non-living) issues rather than infectious (fungi, bacteria, viruses, nematodes) diseases. Purpling, spotting, slow growth can all be indicative of cold temperatures- either in the soil or in air or both. Anytime you see symptoms in the top of plant, be sure to check the root system to make sure they are fibrous and white. Also, check the growing point, if you see a good growing point AND good roots, you can chalk up the issue to cold, heat, drought, something abiotic, in other words. Watch the new growth to make sure the plant grows out of the damage, which it should within a week or so.

Curling and twisting of foliage with good roots is usually an ethylene issue, so check your heaters for cracks or incomplete venting. Tomatoes are very susceptible to this damage. The plants will grow out of the damage.

The most common infectious disease at this time of year are root rots. Root rots would result in brown, sloughing roots and would be common in cold wet soils. It is hard to rescue root rots, so toss out and start over, keeping roots warm and on the dry side. Botrytis or gray mold can also be present this time of year and will attack ANY dying tissue if the humidity is high. It is best to figure out how to reduce humidity rather than use fungicides to minimize this disease.

I am still seeing issues in the Shin Cheong Gang rootstock in tomatoes. This rootstock, although resistant to a variety of diseases, seems to produce wimpy roots and show a lot of rat tail symptoms where the fine feeder roots have died due to the fungus disease called corky root rot. The grower who submitted a sample with this rootstock is seeing plants wilt on sunny days and recover overnight. Many of the fruit on the plants are also showing blossom end rot.

I am not sure how much outdoor planting has occurred, but our current weather is very conducive to root maggots, so watch for damage. There are cabbage maggots <https://ag.umass.edu/vegetable/fact-sheets/cabbage-root-maggot> onion maggots <https://ag.umass.edu/vegetable/fact-sheets/onion-maggot> and seed corn maggots <https://ag.umass.edu/vegetable/fact-sheets/seed-corn-maggot>. These are pretty host family specific but there can be some crossover with the seed corn maggot.

As last year, I am accepting commercial grower samples. Please send me a heads up via email if you want to submit a sample: ann.hazelrigg@uvm.edu so we can coordinate getting the sample to me.

GROWER WEBINAR RECORDINGS

Past presentations and discussion on greenhouse management, soil health, and many other topics can be found at <https://www.uvm.edu/extension/horticulture/meetings>

JOIN THE VERMONT VEGETABLE AND BERRY GROWERS ASSOCIATION

If you are not yet part of the VVBGA, check it out at <https://vvbga.org/>. The association's listserv connects commercial growers so they can share information and buy and sell from one another. There are also on-line platforms designed to make it easy for growers to manage their plans and information around produce safety and soil health. We need just a few more farms to reach 400 members – a record high.