

Vermont Vegetable and Berry News – May 5, 2009

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REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

(Montpelier) Things are beyond full swing around here. Tomatoes are flowering in the greenhouses, lettuce is hanging in with this heat. Space spinach starting to bolt but it's been in since last October and yielded extremely well. Transplanted sugar snap peas are in for CSA pick-your-own which starts at the end of the month. Asparagus not up yet but it's early and the mulch was put on pretty thick to avoid frost loss like last year. The last winter market in April was strong. Wholesale accounts are doing real well and are real local, within 4 miles of farm. Having some part time labor this season and it is nice. No pest issues yet except in one greenhouse where something has been munching the bok choy a bit. Still no flea beetles or grubs. Becoming a big fan of nematodes. Released some preventative green lacewing larva into the greenhouses. If it stays this dry aphids aren't going to be much of an issue though. Had 4 new fields tilled up, really excited for this season.

(S. Royalton) We need some rain. Beets, carrots, greens are out of the ground and starting to move. I am sick of using rye and vow that I'll not use it again. It is too damn hard to kill in the spring and it becomes the worst weed I have to deal with. Starting to transplant onions out and first planting of melons started in the greenhouse. With Early Queen not being offered any more I have to figure out another great tasting melon.

(W. Rutland) The garlic is up and looking great. The winter rye is 8 inches high and the four hooped rats did not ruin it, even though they tried real hard. The ground warmed up so fast the potatoes are planted. It's wicked dry but recent rain should help a lot. And of course, what you're all waiting for, the critter report. Seems the woodchuck population is at an all time high. Holes and sightings are all over the farm. Since I am growing more peppers this year, now is the time to start planting several steel surprise packages. I kid you not, personally I have flagged 27 holes, that's a lot of chucks. Since the garlic planting has been doubled, a new curing area needs to be hoed out and readied. August will be here before you know it. Greenhouses are coming along well and the first shipments have been sent. Not sure how the entire flower season will be but seeing the economic indicators and the stock market are currently doing better, I am slightly optimistic.

(Tunbridge) I hate to say how nice the weather is in because that might trigger the pay back. I will just say that things are going well so far. Onions are in, taters are in, all the first rounds of greens are in. It is really pleasant not having to work in mud. Plants in the green house and cold frames like the sunny days. Basically this past week was a nice week to be a farmer.

(Hampton, NY/Fair Haven, VT) Everyone is planting corn and reseeding the fields while it is dry. Most fields that you can't normally get onto have been OK to work already. Rhubarb is up with lots of leaves but still pretty short. Few strawberries flowered but picked those few flowers because it is too early here to let them go since we don't have covers for them for frost. Honeyberry bushes are in full blossom and leafed out. Blueberries are getting ready to blossom and just the first leaves coming out on some of the plants. Grapes are breaking bud and the Raspberries are starting to leaf out and send

new shoots. Fruit trees are breaking bud also and some have a few leaves out. Ground is VERY dry and been praying for rain since we don't have our watering system set up for the season yet. We have been working feverishly to clean and mulch every bed on the farm to get ahead of the weeds. And we plan to work the vegetable gardens over and get ready for planting in another week or two.

(Plainfield NH) Interesting weather we had last week. We hit 90 or very close to it for 4 days running, and a couple of those high temp days were accompanied by a 30 mph wind. It was pretty tough on trying to transplant anything—in the greenhouse or field—and we spent a lot of time watering. As a result, the dogwood blooms are gone by (they bloomed for about 20 minutes in that heat) and the daffodils are on the downside of their display. Even the maple leaves (which usually don't make their appearance until the 15th-20th of May) are unfurling. Welcome to New England.

Now that we are back to more seasonal temps the work continues at a more measured pace. The onion transplants are in, some lettuce and beet transplants out, and carrots, beet greens, peas, and greens like arugula have been seeded in the field. Hope to get our first corn direct-seeded within the next 4 days. We are trying to nurse the strawberries along with supplemental fertilizer and extra water (we are pretty dry here and haven't gotten the showers that others have gotten) by irrigation. The winter was pretty tough on them and it puzzled us until I learned that dairy farmers lost every stitch of alfalfa in their fields up and down the valley. We went out to dig up some field grown perennial delphiniums for sale at the greenhouse and found that very few survived the winter. Best we can figure is that although we had good snow cover early in the winter we experienced an ice and heavy rain storm back around Christmas and it must have caused some problems at that time.

(Wolcott) The dry weather has let us get on the fields to spread compost and make beds for the Brassica seed crops – all of which are ready to go in the ground any time now. We'll plant the broccoli first because it needs the most time for seed to mature. The perennial beds of chives and evergreen onions already need weeding. We've cared for them for two years already with only a couple of pounds of seed to show for it, so we're hoping that this year they'll really get going and make a good crop – and if we can keep up with the weeding they'll go on for several more years at least.

(Rochester) With little winter damage and a light snow pack, we got to pruning the blueberries early this year and gave them a little more detailed attention. Buds are breaking open in the Patriots and Blue Ray already and the crop looks fabulous. We will be anxious about frost during May no doubt but hopefully this early spring also comes with an early last frost. Raspberries are bursting into leaf and our sour cherry trees are loaded with fruit. No bugs to contend with yet but we are expecting them after the fairly mild winter. If the dry weather persists it may keep the insects down and help the cherries make it through their main challenge of a damp spring.

(Grand Isle) Asparagus season started a few days earlier than our average. May 3d was our first date of harvest. We are hoping for a spring with moderate to cool temperatures so the spears don't shoot up faster than we can keep up with them.