



Vermont Vegetable and Berry News –May 6, 2013
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REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

(Royalton) Harvesting fiddleheads, ramps, garlic mustard and green garlic (the English call this wet garlic). Planted peas and rhubarb and lovage is up. The blueberry plants put in last year are budded and some have leaves started already. Red onions from last year are still firm and unsprouted after being kept in a dark, cold root cellar all year. We had a bad onion maggot problem in our garlic last year. Hopefully the cold temps killed them off.

(Starksboro) Beautiful full heads of lettuce in the high tunnel. I have learned to give them all their water early and let them be dry as they mature. I had bad bottom rot last year when I made the assumption that the bigger the plants, the more water they needed.

(Leicester) The lack of rain has been great and terrible. The sod from our newly opened fields is dying nicely but our direct seeded crops are not able to germinate. We were planning to have a pond by now, but the engineering is taking a very long time. So we're hoping for some rain soon. Our flea beetle crop does not seem discouraged by the lack of water.

(Montpelier) Everything has accelerated around here. Employees are all finally arrived after much wrangling. Feels good to have some help on board and really be able to push things. Aphids made their annual spring appearance in the spinach but their timing was off. It had bolted so we tore it all out and are giving the houses a few weeks rest before we move the summer crops into them. Over-wintered leeks look terrible with the added deer damage. Almost plowed them under but being an optimist, I sidedressed and rehilled them. Should have a real nice early crop in 2 to 3 weeks. Asparagus harvest starts tomorrow. Deer fence is up and running. The strawberries look very good. Best looking garlic crop I have had in a couple of years. Market demand is good both retail and wholesale.

(Westfield) Slow start on bedding plant sale. A lot of people want to plant their tomatoes. Work in the field is going well; using a lot of drip tape. A nice rain would be welcome. Greenhouse crops are doing really good.

(Norwich) Dry is the word. I chisel plowed a new half-acre field last week and the clods of dirt are now baking in the sun. Hoping to get a little rain to soften them up before attacking them with the disc harrow and rotovator. Seeds are amazingly resilient though, and spinach, carrots, beets, peas, turnips and arugula are finding their way through the crust. Piglets arrive yesterday and immediately went to work tilling up another new piece of land. After hours on the tractor with the chisel plow on the first field I am wishing I had had the forethought to put the pigs there last year. I'll move the pigs to new ground every few weeks and till and cover crop behind them. In our orchard, the trees are starting to leaf out and I've been baiting the electric fence with peanut butter and keeping a nervous eye on the 5 deer who loiter outside the fence. Next to fence is the asparagus; I had never seen deer eat asparagus until last year, when they really went to town on our new plantings.

(Williamsville) Our 5 hoop houses are rocking out lots of greens, radishes, salad turnips, overwintered spinach and cilantro. Best opening market in the first 5 years of the farm. Transplanted all cabbage, onions, leeks, half the broccoli and some greens. Direct seeded peas, parsnips, beets, carrots, radishes, turnips, and greens. Garlic is on target. Tomato, peppers and eggplant on target in our temperature-controlled mudroom. We may plant hoophouse with fancy cukes this week. Plan to start field cukes, melons, squash and Brussels sprouts this week. Busy planting 75 apple trees. Significant fox pressure on our 425 chickens. Exciting and satisfying time of the season.

(Williston) Had my first harvest of herbs from the hoop house just in time for City Market Herb Day: cilantro, anise hyssop, sage, thyme, tarragon. Irrigation all set up in the hoop house for last crop. The dry weather has kept the perennials outside growing slow. Lovage, sorrel, chives and tarragon are slowly coming alive. Garlic looks fantastic so far. I am almost done with my irrigation project so I can run it to the rest of the beds. Thanks for all the great listserv replies I received from my irrigation question. Getting lots of weeding and bed preparation this week but I don't want to get too excited about this warmer than normal weather we are having. I do remember snow on Mother's day in the past!

(Hampton NY) Top half inch of soil is dry so putting soaker hose on seed crops that have been planted. Soil temps in the garden in the low 60's while the hayfield is in the mid 50's. There is good soil moisture under the landscape cloth and further down in the soil profile so when planting larger transplants I won't be as concerned. Looking at the extended forecast I have decided to jump the gun and put in a row of green beans covered with a vented plastic. If I can get the landscape cloth laid I may push some tomato transplants under plastic as well. When pulling some winter rye up I found quite a few Japanese beetle larvae.

Seeded to date: radish, beets, turnip, peas, carrots, Swiss chard, green beans. Transplanted: collard greens and kale. Broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cauliflower and cabbage transplants going in soon.

(Argyle NY) We just switched from winter markets to our bigger outdoor summer markets. Our three high tunnels are producing greens like crazy: kale, chard, lettuce, Asian greens and parsley. Winter crops are ending and tomatoes, summer squash, basil, cucumbers, beans, etc. all being planted in this week. Spinach tunnel starting to get some yellow leaves. It was tested by Extension, showed Pythium initially then Fusarium a few days later. We thought we were doing a great thing by using drip irrigation all winter, but it was keeping the center of the tunnel wetter, where the Fusarium started. A drench with Root Shield Plus and Actinovate slowed the spread and many sections were unaffected, so we had plenty for harvest. All in all, tremendous production with no heat. Salanova lettuces from Johnny's seeded 9/30 and transplanted to the tunnel were finally ready for harvest on 4/1. Definitely seeded too late but production was unbelievable and harvesting was far faster than direct seeded salad mix, cutting about 5 pounds in 3 minutes. It survived 15 below perfectly with 2 or 3 layers of rowcover; some other lettuce varieties got a little bit of cold damage. Some of our new favorite lettuce varieties for winter salad mix are Blade, Bolsachica and Spock, as well as Sulu, all seeded individually in rows. Very little downy mildew and when we got some, Double Nickel took care of it. Flea beetles are in the tunnels and outside after the field brassicas. Biothrips netting on hoops works well against them. We have 3 seedings of the spring crops (carrots, beets, spinach, herbs, peas) in the fields. Strawberries look great. We are harvesting overwintered field spinach and will start on new spinach and arugula this week. Parsnips are out of the ground with little damage from carrot rust fly, which may be due to interplanted sage, which a reputable farmer told us to try. We have issues with greenhouse soil mix and feel it is the compost quality affecting germination and plant vigor. Too dry outside and there is too much work, but irrigation is up and running.

(Burlington) Interesting thing happened this year with our hairy vetch cover crops: most of the acres we planted as oats plus vetch did not have any vetch survival. All were seeded the second or third week of August at our typical rates of 75 to 100 lb/acre oats plus 25 lb/acre vetch. We had a two acre patch that had some weeds poking through, so we mowed it in early October. Only that patch has significant vetch regrowth. Everywhere else virtually no vetch regrew. Maybe these longer autumn growing seasons dictate a lower oats seeding rate. Or maybe we need to plan on mowing the cover if the oats reach a certain height by a certain date. The winter rye plus vetch is fine, as well as the mowed oats plus vetch, so I don't think we had seed quality issues.

(Weare NH) As with everyone else, the unseasonable dryness is adding to the spring work load trying to keep transplants adequately watered. Drip tape is a big help, but I wasn't expecting to have to manage it quite this soon. Transplanting and seeding continues. The raised beds are being built in the new high tunnel. Plan to get a lot of plastic mulch laid in my large field today so more transplanting can be done. Tilling is done for the time being, just need to fill beds up!

(Grand Isle) Warm weather seedlings are ready to go out but we don't trust the temperatures just yet. Our early plantings of potatoes, peas, corn, and greens are in. We had our first day of asparagus harvesting. Lots of our time is spent irrigating . Lake Champlain level is currently 97 feet which is quite a contrast to exactly 2 years ago when it rose to over 103 feet. Deer are everywhere, voles love the tender lettuce, robins want to nest in the engine areas of the tractors, and painted turtles are basking in the sunshine on top of the irrigation suction line float. There is plenty to do no one is bored around here. We found the perfect remedy for any farming blues: watch Ken Burn's documentary of farming in the dust bowl days. It puts things in perspective and makes us realize how hunky dory our days are in comparison.

(Salisbury NH) Things have kicked into high gear; everything is coming at once. Broccoli and pepper plugs arrived and needed to be transplanted. Red potatoes, Walla Walla and Red Zeplin onions and Lancelot Leeks are in the ground. Weeds are also in full swing; every time we get manure or compost from someone else there is always a new set of weeds to deal with. Shepherd's purse and red sorrel are terrible! Hoophouse already getting too hot for the spinach, lettuce, chard and radishes. They will have to come out soon. We also got some drip irrigation this year and have to get that hooked up.