



University of Vermont

Extension

College of Agriculture and Life Sciences

## **Vermont Vegetable and Berry Grower News – June 2, 2025**

Compiled by Vern Grubinger, University of Vermont Extension

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

### **REPORTS FROM THE FIELD**

**(Shaftsbury)** Strawberry plants and blossoms look quite nice this year especially. compared to last season. Found some early leafminer damage and eggs in spinach and sprayed entrust. Interesting 2 fields with spinach and beets about 1/2 mile apart and only leafminers in one field.

Some potato aphids on greenhouse toms. Been releasing aphidoletes in there preventatively but I guess not enough of them. Found some onion thrips on the garlic and sprayed entrust. Crops seem to be growing slowly but hoping some sun gets them juiced up. Bedding plant sales picked up last week or so with the arrival of some sun.

Great crew this year, but we had some attrition of a few experienced crew members moving on, but allowing some “retooling” and expanded roles for other folks. Grateful for everyone who contributes to the operation and for our customers who show up every spring.

**(Huntington)** 9.5" rain in May, plus 2" the last week of April has led to a much grosser spring planting season than we'd prefer. Luckily, we got a lot done in mid-April so didn't fall too far behind on field prep. I don't think I've ever seen the combination of cold weather, clouds, and rain that we had the last few weeks. Near-constant rain with 45-degree daytime temps is not super conducive to good crop growth.

That being said, the potatoes have not rotted in the ground, early corn looks surprisingly OK, but brassicas transplanted before the rain in April are showing highly variable tolerance to living in a wet refrigerator for 5 weeks.

After doing field prep with chisel plows, discs, and field cultivators for 15 years, we finally added a 3pt tiller to the mix. Relying on the sun to come out for a few days to help kill cover crops between draft tillage passes seems unreliable of late, so one-pass-tillage is now on the menu.

Indoors, GH tomatoes and cukes seem to look better than ever, which is a testament to our GH team.

**(Burlington)** Widespread maggots remind me that it has been a few years since we've had a spring this cool and wet. Not typically a problem for us in our dry, sandy loams, this year we are seeing damage and loss in onions, brassicas, beets and beans. Here's hoping that the 180 to mid-July temps this week helps us out, since soil temperature seems to be the main factor. Our earliest onions on black plastic have much less maggot loss than the adjacent onions on silver poly, and instead of the black growing slightly faster than the silver, they are outdistancing them in a big way.

We've had no trouble getting into the fields, but the low temperatures have slowed the decomposition of our cover crop residues to a crawl. In fields I would expect to be residue-free or nearly so we are fighting big clumps of undigested biomass and dealing with more of that than ideal in many of our vegetables. We were able to get enough overwintered cover crop breakdown to seed 10 acres of a sunn hemp-Sudangrass mix last week, and I am hoping the 2:1 ratio will result in a little more N production than last year's 50:50 mix, which wound up being nearly all Sudangrass.

CSA marketing has been slow this spring, partially an enrollment hangover from two years of major flood losses and somewhat due to the lack of spring-like weather. I am sure the uncertain employment future for a meaningful slice of our CSA members has also contributed to result in our slowest sign-ups since the post-Irene 2012 spring. Marketing has taken a lot more time, and it makes me appreciate how powerful the word-of-mouth engine of happy customers has been in keeping our sales effort to a minimum most years.

**(Orwell)** Things are looking good in our tunnels this season despite prolonged stretches of cloudy days. In our two early tunnels we purchased bumble bees and think that paid off since there have been so many days of closed sides. However, we have noticed some early fruit with weird distortions on the blossom end, wondering if maybe the bees were too aggressive or if something related to so many cloudy cool days led to weird pollination?

Potato aphids are just starting to spread quickly, as temperatures warm. We have learned the hard way to manage them with spray first, beneficials second.

This year we are experimenting with some caterpillar tunnels and different trellising systems for peppers and husk cherries. We'll see if these investments pay off with easier harvests and happier crew!

It's great to feel the energy of our staff as they return to the farm from college, definitely raises the fun factor and keeps the laughter flowing.

**(Underhill)** Like most, we've had a wet spring, making it challenging to stay on schedule. Thankfully, with our well drained soils and no flooding so far, we can get back in the fields pretty quickly. We've been able to get in the sweet corn, only slightly delayed. Feeling cramped for space as we can't get into the wet ends of the fields that are usually dried out by now.

Planted most pumpkins last week but staggering some to plant this week to spread the pollination window out. Trialing some pumpkins and squash in black plastic this season. Most transplants that went in before the cold and wet week look like they are hanging in there. That cool week worked well for establishing our newly planted strawberries.

Adding a heater to our GH this year was a great move for our starts and crops in there. PYO flowers are mostly planted. Customers seem anxious to visit!

**(Claremont NH)** May has been quite the month and ending on a 1.75" rain event, putting us at 5.85" since May 6 when I got my weather station working again. Our clay soils are once again saturated and will be saturated for a while longer which is starting to stunt some crops.

Still harvesting wintered-over crops that have done really well. More scallions than we can imagine and have actually been harvesting and bunching their flowers and those are a big hit. Flipped most tunnels for summer production, finally was able to take off row cover for our early unheated tomato tunnel and trellis only to see a 39-degree night in our forecast. Wintered over carrots and onions are starting to size up, just dealing with super wet conditions where we had them wintered which has caused stunting. First cucumber beetle was sighted on May 30.

Snails and slugs galore! Our tunnels were covered with snail trails reaching above the hipboards. Weeding has been difficult since nothing is really drying out so we are crawling beds and removing weeds from the fields. Last fall's incredible production has been a life saver with root crops lasting till next week, providing our main season CSA for 2 weeks.

**(Plainfield NH)** Cool and rainy. Our soils are sandy, so getting transplants out has been great, and the row cover is earning its money. Strawberries in full bloom, plants look good but not sizing as much as we hoped. Could be cool weather, could be the after-effect of late season galinsoga infestation last fall. This week will tell as the temps ramp back up.

Woodchucks and deer intervention are creating a lot of pressure, especially irritating when they are walking through succulent alsike clover to chew on spring brassicas. Outside planting and cultivations are under control. Vegetable greenhouses/high tunnels doing well with tomatoes and cukes and should be in deep supply before strawberries come in and we open the farmstand. Sales of bedding plants quite good despite unfriendly planting weather for the retail folks.

**(Little Compton RI)** Rain and cold in early season 2025. Never have had to reschedule and often cut out crops because of delayed planting and too much moisture. Peas, though a customer draw, are not good money so we canceled our late plantings; for fear they would come on in the heat and be an even less profitable venture. Yet beans are a great profit center for us. No other vendor at our farmers market has them often, or when they do, they are picked too late. We pick them extra young and get \$7.00 lb., moving 150 lbs. on a Saturday.

Just watched the VVBGA webinar recording on [YouTube](#) about best practices for organic onion production. It is packed with good information! Never thought black plastic was hurting our production and storage long term health! Why copper is a poor choice for a fungicide! All onion growers will get something here.

This year we tried to harden off early onions by putting them out in a cold wet period in mid-April--we really set them back! Then Allium Leaf Miner showed up two weeks ago. This pest could be a new normal from now on. We were caught off guard by a late flight of ALM on leeks last fall.

## **UPDATES FROM THE UVM PLANT DIAGNOSTIC CLINIC**

Ann Hazelrigg, Extension Plant Pathologist

Seeing rhizoctonia crown rot in high tunnels causing a rot right at soil line of cucurbits and tomatoes. This usually happens with cool cloudy conditions and wet soils. It is worth replanting since (hopefully) the weather will become sunnier and more dry.

Tomato pith necrosis diagnosed on tomato. This occurs during cloudy, cool weather when plants are growing vigorously. Black cankers are noted on the stems that can lead to wilting and death. For more info and pictures go to <https://www.umass.edu/agriculture-food-environment/vegetable/fact-sheets/tomato-pith-necrosis>. The plants can grow out of the damage in some cases. Verticillium canker/wilt was also identified, in high tunnel tomato. Misshapen ends of parthenocarpic cukes noted in a high tunnel. This may be cultivar-related but cool cloudy conditions have not helped. I suspect more normal cukes will be produced with sun and heat.

White mold identified on high tunnel cukes. This fungal disease has a wide host range on many vegetables and ornamentals. Symptoms include very fluffy white mold on stems leading to wilt and death. Remove the infected tissue before the fungus produces hard, black sclerotia (looks like little mouse droppings) since these can overwinter for several years. The pathogen is usually hit or miss in a tunnel but likes poor air circulation, cool and cloudy/wet conditions. <https://www.umass.edu/agriculture-food-environment/vegetable/fact-sheets/white-mold>

## **WEEKLY PEST AND SCOUTING REPORT**

The Vermont Vegetable and Berry Growers Association provides funding to support scouting and pest reporting led by Dr. Vic Izzo and UVM's Vermont Participatory Action Research Team ([VPART](#)). VVBGA members receive these detailed weekly reports via the VVBGA listserv. Another good reason to join the VVBGA! You can also view past reports on [this page](#).

## **CREATE A PICK-YOUR OWN FARM LISTING**

It's free to VVBGA members and only takes 5 minutes! The public can then search for PYO farms at [vermontpickyourown.org](http://vermontpickyourown.org) using a [map](#) or [list](#). Suitable for any PYO crop including apples, berries, flowers, pumpkins, and more. **How to create a listing:**

- 1) Login to your VVBGA member account at <https://vvbga.org/>
  - 2) Click "Pick-Your-Own-Listing" on the left-hand menu.
  - 3) Click the orange "Add Your Listing" button.
  - 4) Use the drop downs to fill in the details of your farm's PYO operation.
  - 5) Hit the "Save" button at the bottom of the page after you complete your listing.
- Questions, or need help? Julie Callahan, [julie.callahan@uvm.edu](mailto:julie.callahan@uvm.edu), 518-944-7149

## **NEW EPISODES OF THE FARMERS' SHARE PODCAST**

High Tunnels & Field Crops, the Farming Journey of Kagan & Elise of Blackbird Organics  
<https://thefarmersshare.com/2025/05/05/kagan-elise-of-blackbird-organics-ep29/>

Bob Gray Reflects on His Life Being a Farmer at 4 Corners Farm  
<https://thefarmersshare.com/2025/04/07/bob-gray-of-4-corners-farm-ep28/>

Old Tractors with New Tools, New Barn & Commercial Kitchen at Four Corners Farm with Trip Shaw  
<https://thefarmersshare.com/2025/06/02/trip-shaw-of-four-corners-farm/>

## **GROWER SURVEY ON INTER-SEEDING COVER CROPS**

Researchers at UMaine seek information from vegetable farmers to better understand best practices and areas for improvement around interseeding cover crops in our region. This survey is confidential; responses will be presented in aggregate. Your input is appreciated. [Click here](#) to take the survey at. Questions? [rachel.schattman@maine.edu](mailto:rachel.schattman@maine.edu)

## **GREENHOUSE TOMATOES, PLASTICULTURE STRAWBERRIES, AND A NEW PACKSHED**

**Tuesday June 17, 4:00-6:30 pm**

**Crossroad Farm, 671 West Fairlee Road, Fairlee, Vermont 05045**

Cost: Free for VVBGA member farms, \$10 all others.

*No registration required, just show up! If severe weather is predicted, an event may be cancelled and a notice will be sent to the VVBGA listserv. To join the VVBGA please go to [vbgga.org](http://vbgga.org).*

Crossroad Farm grows a wide range of vegetables, plus strawberries, flowers, and bedding plants on about 40 acres and in 18 high tunnels of different sizes. They have an on-farm market and a farm stand in Norwich. Established in the 1980's by Tim and Janet Taylor, the farm is now owned and operated by Phil Mason, who worked at the farm previously. Phil will describe the farm, its goals, and improvements underway including construction of a new wash-pack facility. We'll tour the strawberry field and visit several tomato tunnels that are planted at different times and have different levels of infrastructure investment. We'll discuss these systems, varieties, soil fertility, and pest management. Becky Maden and Vern Grubinger from UVM Extension will be on hand to offer observations on crop production, Andy Chamberlin will chime in about the pack shed project. Sarah McIlvenie from the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets will talk about programs that provide funding for produce farms.