



## Vermont Vegetable and Berry News – June 21, 2011

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### REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

(Berlin) Thank you all for offers of extra plants. We fared well only losing a round of transplants and some direct seeded stuff during the flooding. Due to the wet weather and a oddly placed family vacation we had not transplanted nearly 5 acres of sweet corn...phew! Peppers, field tomatoes and the full run of farm stand stuff. Strawberries were on high ground and are coming on strong.

(Essex) Our strawberry season started about 4 to 5 days later than last year and we lost about 6 or 7 acres from too many floods, not sure yet if the plants will recover and come back for next year but we put in some new plants this week in case they don't. It originally looked like the fields that did not get flooded were going to be great, but it seems like we are not getting the yields off them we had thought. Our first corn tasseled at about a foot and a half tall, so we are not sure what is going to happen with that corn. We put some extra fertilizer on it to try and get a better root system going. Our first pea field is doing good and we started picking the sugar snaps and snows. The English peas are only a few days away. With the few days of sun lately things are turning around!

(Warren) It's been a really good start to the season for us. Strawberries are almost ripe, hot house tomatoes are in, as are snap peas. I'm sold on saturated media tests for the high tunnels as everything looks fantastic. Wholesale demand is way up as is farm store business. Field crops are all doing well. We have to do a fair amount of sidedressing after all the rain, but we can deal with that. I believe we had lightning damage in one of our onion plots. All of the plants were gone in the center of the field with these radiating lines of nothing. The plants were about 8 inches tall and we scooped them out of the worst beds and consolidated them. Didn't seem to affect transplanted onions at all. We are going seed some nursery beds with a pinpoint seeder in a few weeks and overwinter them with those quick hoops. The idea is to pull the plants out in the spring and transplant them in the field. Anything to avoid a whole week in March of seeding onions into flats.

(Shaftsbury) Summer is setting in with leafhoppers on beans and spuds. I sprayed some Pyganic on those and it seems to be working pretty well. Thrips are heavy in onions and am using a backpack sprayer with Entrust and Pyganic to give a good soaking to drip down into the whorl. Flea beetles too! Berry picking is OK but we have a not-so-great stand of berries planted last year and the straw was filled with rye seed so it appears that we are harvesting in the prairie. First transplanted sweet corn (Bon Appetit) is in full tassel. Summer squash and zuke picking in full swing as are peas. Thinned out greenhouse raspberries and have been spreading Persimilis for spider mites this year and they look clean, except for the leafhoppers. Overall things look good but plant growth is a bit small.

(Fairfax) There is so much luck involved in farming. I can pat myself on the back and think I'm doing a good job, but luck is the trump card. We had an unbelievable Father's Day weekend. I had a decent crop of strawberries for the PYO folks, even though there is more TPB damage than I am happy with, but the weekend could have been horrendous. The next town over got grape size hail, but not us; it would have sent pickers scrambling for cover and shredded the berries. We had classic Vermont summer day with low 70's, light breeze and enough fruit to keep the pickers happy. It could have easily been rainy and cold, and then I would have thought why did I plant so many berries? The odds are that if you farm long enough everyone once in a while you get a weekend like this one.

(Jericho) Finally caught up on the planting, just in time to dive into the cultivating. What didn't drown in April and May is now growing nicely. Harvesting the first beans, peas, and zucchini. Pest pressure intense, but under control except for the four-legged ones which seem bolder and more abundant this year. Just finished harvesting first crop of new potatoes (in tunnel) and into second planting soon (in field). Garlic crop looking great: last fall we planted winter rye onto field where broiler chickens pastured all summer; within this we disked beds for garlic and set plastic at one tractor width apart, leaving a full bed width between garlic beds for rye to continue growing. Planted garlic onto plastic last fall and did not mulch (probably got lucky with good snow cover all winter). One side dressing, one quick weeding out the holes and that's it for labor input so far. Lots of natural irrigation and they're growing strong. Just recently incorporated winter rye in beds between the garlic and now readying these for fall root crops.

(Brandon) Despite the cool weather so far, we began picking row covered strawberries (Sable) on June 4th. And despite the wet season so far, flavor has been excellent and yields are strong. Now moving into midseason varieties, which have held off nicely, most likely due to lack of hot weather. Looking to be a long season, as no hot weather in immediate future. We love to see at 4 solid weeks of picking. Leaf diseases and Botrytis have been scarce, perhaps helped by two early tank mix sprays with Actinovate and Serenade. Biggest pest so far has been the onslaught of cedar wax wings. We always have some around, but this year it looks like a gang of chipmunks with wings. Investment in netting is a necessity if their numbers stay this high. PYO turnout only fair so far but retail stand sales steady and strong. We are challenged by the second consecutive year of road construction and paving. One more week of that and finished. Other field crops are growing OK though we see lots of erratic growth where our soils are not homogenous. The temperatures have made a noticeable difference with germination. One of those years where the sandy lands that were slotted for fallow and covers were called back into service out of necessity. Sweet corn from transplants has great color, but the height on some varieties is comically short. Standbys like Temptation look fantastic, and have much better plant structure. Three varieties of greenhouse cukes have provided a great staggered harvest, with the different ones taking turns cranking out easy 2 dollar bills. Probably not as much total harvest dollars as a tomato (our main greenhouse crop), but ridiculously short crop time and not too much labor. Seeded April 1 and picking full bushel baskets (50+ fruit) off of 75 plants every day since June 1.

(Westminster West) It doesn't get much crazier than this: almost got tractor stuck on one end of field and having to run drip on the other side! Finally set out winter squash and pumpkin fields, two weeks later than last year but at least they are in and an acre of row cover is billowing in the wind. First year picking strawberries are great so far! I know it's because we have never had any growing here but there are no bugs yet and the only problem has been the rain ruining many of them but they are huge and very sweet. Farmers' market customers have been snapping them up as fast as we can pick 'em.

Garlic scapes all picked and those have sold well also, which is a surprise. Garlic crop looks huge, with many bulbs showing impressive size already; orders are already coming in for seed. Onion field really taking off now and hope for a huge crop with all the drip tape and raised bed investment involved. Plant sales tapering off now, perennials doing fine and dumped the last of the tomato plants already. Herbs holding on as well. Vetch in full flower on cover crop fields, I hate plowing in such a nice looking crop but need space for fall plantings soon. Greenhouse raspberries are setting fruit and I'm not looking forward to picking as of yet! Weeds seem well under control, but most everything is on plastic now since labor is getting scarce and I'm not getting any younger.

(South Burlington/Shelburne) Hoophouse rebuilt from collapse in March, finished in April, fully planted out, harvested our first tomato yesterday! With only one hoophouse, managing greens and tomatoes in the same hoophouse is challenging, but both crops doing well. Outside crops still very challenged in our heavy clay soils. Even with no rain for the last week soil moisture levels are still too high. We started Friday Burger Nights - selling our burgers and our homemade buns and then serving a side salad with our greens. First three weeks have gone exceptionally well. Great for the community, great for us; it has brought loads of new customers to our farm and with live music and great food, people are happy. This is our first season with veggies in our farm store so it is an experiment to see what customers will want (since so many are in a veg CSA elsewhere). We are trying to find our veg niche at our farm store.

(Plainfield) Plant sales winding down. Could have more for the mid-June crowd. Brussels sprouts the new hot item. Looks like a great strawberry season. Low TPB counts, perhaps due to higher rates of Pyganic and Mycotrol in the sprays. No spring frosts and a huge amount of rain resulted in a flush of king berries. Fingers crossed for nice picking weather. Kale finally taking off after bad early flea beetles; took 3 Entrust sprays. Hand picked potato bug adults to minimize their population boom. Weekly cultivations keeping weeds down in spite of frequent rains. Hooray for sandy loam soil.

(Westfield) We are just starting to pick strawberries the crop and the plants looks good, I have a little bit more clipper damage than I would like and I was kind of surprised as it is a new field far from the last one. Bedding plant sales have been slower and late but over all just a bit lower than last year. Vegetable crops are irregular some looking good some not but it looks like everything is catching up with nicer weather.

(Plainfield NH) Strawberry harvest in full swing; a crop of great promise when we uncovered in April is being downsized by Asiatic garden beetle grubs feeding on roots and a leaf scorch and leafspot outbreak a couple of weeks back, despite fungicide applications. Still, the crop is a big improvement over last year and if the weather stays cool and pleasant the plants picking could hold up well. Blueberries sizing and I am told that this is about the time the maggot traps should be going out. Bug problems that are getting hard to ignore are rose chafers on the blueberries, SCB in the pumpkins. GH tomatoes coming in, but with the cool nights we soon will be heating them again to maintain crop. We have been dodging the weather bullets. Every storm in the neighborhood that passes through seems to have a hail event nearby. Netting is helping but pressure from cedar waxwings is growing every year. Inputs for small fruits continue to escalate on every front.

(Lockport NY) Western NY is all over the map when it comes to production this season. Depending on soil type and just a matter of few miles, some fields are still flooded, others soggy, and some so dry that irrigation has been running for most of the week. Lack of sun early on and cool temperatures have slowed growth on many crops while the wild fluctuations have caused a great deal of plant stress. Lettuce has grown well while spinach crops have failed and broccoli has bolted. Sweet corn has been slow to grow and the early plantings started under plastic aren't much ahead of the bare-ground seeded. Insect pests like flea beetles, leaf hoppers, and cucumber beetles have been a challenge. In some areas, we even have found significant numbers of corn earworm moths and have European corn borers laying eggs in the sweet corn fields. I spend part of my time working with growers looking to move more into production to meet the demand of winter markets. The way we are going, that well may be the best markets we will have this year.

(Enfield NH) Lots of lettuce, chard, kale going to market. Adding garlic scapes, beet greens and a few more greens this week. Weeds starting to come in force. Deer eating the pepper plants again, and this year they are near the house so the deer are coming looking for them, I need to find a solution for that. Eggplant is flowering. First summer squash by the end of the week, I hope. Starting to irrigate a lot.

(Bath MI) The Diva cukes in the tunnel are starting to push now and we are harvesting almost daily off of those with only one sighting of SCB. We have sticky traps and lures if we see some more but they are staying in the box for now. We have been harvesting a few Sungold and Supersweet cherry tomatoes the past two weeks out of the moveable tunnel but haven't had enough to take to market yet. The Big Beef have pretty nice fruit set and some large greens but no sign of breaking yet. The tomatoes in the half of that tunnel that was flooded three times this spring are definitely smaller but they are growing much better now that it's dried out. We've also trenched and are putting down some drain tile to keep it from happening next year. Small green, purple, and yellow beans are showing in the tunnel and we should be harvesting those in two weeks or less. Beets, carrots, and radishes are continuing to sell well at the market along with the lettuce mix. The next two weeks are a little light since we would be harvesting off of the plantings that were washed out in all the storms and the ones planted after that aren't quite ready yet. Snapdragons are going to market for the first time this week (if we get our sales tax license in time) and Lisianthus in the tunnel are growing nicely. There are no cuts at our market so we'll see how it goes when we start taking those. It's a little late but we are putting in sweet potatoes in part of the big tunnel this week to have for fall and winter markets. Field tomatoes, peppers, and eggplant are cruising along with some well-timed rains and warm weather. It seems like we shouldn't have to think about it yet, but we hope to have our fall/winter seeding and transplant schedule finished soon so we can get things in order to start some transplants by the middle of July.

(Salisbury NH) Pepper transplants are in but suffered from the lengthy cool, wet weather previously. Cucumber stems had some weird tough looking strips. Potatoes look really nice, saw some CPB eggs. Picked beautiful Bibb lettuce, Skyphos from Johnny's. Spinach looks good but not for long, flies under row cover look like leaf miners to me. Almost time to pull it up anyway. The row covers help but we don't seal the edges with dirt because we pull them up too frequently to pick and/or weed. String beans in the hoop house doing well. This was an experiment; at first they didn't seem much further along than outside planting but they did better when the weather got cool and wet. Strawberries (Seascape) are doing well; last year 100% loss to TPB, this year so far so good. We thought we had a marmorated stink bug but Alan Eaton said no. The antennae did not have black and white banding. That was good news.

(Argyle NY) There has to be a challenging season now and then, but this Spring has been the winner. It dried out some and we planted like crazy then got huge storms and hail 2 weeks ago, which did a lot of damage on the greens and other things. However, 2 weeks later (as we learned last time we got hail), things look much better and the new lettuce and spinach are growing up. We re-seeded the one high tunnel completely with a full seeding of herbs, beans, arugula, etc. since it had been over 2 weeks and still the rains kept coming; we had planned to take the tunnel out of production, but getting a short-term seeding in seemed more important. Thank goodness for high tunnels! The strawberries that were gorgeous went down fast after the hail and rains, but still a pretty good crop, and the snow peas are doing well now. Stressed transplants are mostly in now; will hopefully bounce back. It's a great year to show farm interns that all doesn't run smooth, but diversity is saving us and markets are busier every week. (Customers even loved the Swiss chard with hail holes!) The biothrips netting from DuBois Agrinovation is working nicely on the arugula beds; you can see through it, air passes through, but flea beetles can't get it. We had a problem with a roll of Biotello being a light brownish color and see-through, which is a defect, so don't use it if you see that: weeds come through it.

(Little Compton, RI) We tried these over-wintering onion growing procedures: Started seed in August, transplanted into raised black plastic in September, hooped and row-covered in mid-October, covered with a second layer of clear plastic in early December. They overwintered fine. Mid-March removed clear plastic, April 1 took off row cover. They grew fine until three weeks ago and then they all went to seed. We were surprised and not too happy as they were not close to the size we wanted. Worried about making things worse by letting them just continue growing. We pulled them and let them dry down on top of the plastic raised beds. As an experiment, we let a row continue to grow, seed pods and all. Surprise, they are growing quite nicely. Another surprise, on onions we pulled the seed pods continued to mature! That was what we wanted to avoid. In future, we think it is best to take off the seed pods (scapes) whether you leave them in the ground or pull them up to dry. Bottom-line: farmers' market customers think they are tasty as any southern Vidalia onion, we just wish we had more weight to make all the effort financially worthwhile. Another farmer nearby grew Topcrop from Territorial Seed and he said only 10% set seed pods and the rest grew great large onions.

## **UVM PLANT DIAGNOSTIC CLINIC REPORT**

(Ann Hazelrigg)

A couple of tomato greenhouses have had a lot of bacterial canker. This is a nasty disease that causes splitting in tomato stems, long black cankers (sunken areas), 'firing' on leaf edges and between veins. Ripening fruit may also have a white raised birds eye spotting but I have only seen this a few times. This is typically a warm wet conditions disease but we did have some high temps and in poorly ventilated (hot) greenhouses, it can be a real problem. If you suspect the disease, cut into the stem lengthwise and look for lots of browning in the water conducting system; to be sure, send a sample to the clinic, or give a call and we can come out to do a rapid assay that tells you immediately. To manage the disease, avoid transfer of the bacteria to other plants by minimizing working in the plants and especially not going from infected houses or plants to the field or to clean greenhouses. When pruning be sure to wash hands often, sterilize cutting knives, etc. Cut off infected plants at the base and get them out of the house immediately. A few growers report good luck with Agriphage, a virus that attacks the bacteria. It is organic approved and does not cure the disease but can add some weeks to harvest. See: [http://www.omnilytics.com/products/agriphage/agriphage\\_info/agriphage\\_faq.html](http://www.omnilytics.com/products/agriphage/agriphage_info/agriphage_faq.html).

For more info on canker: [http://vegetablemndonline.ppath.cornell.edu/factsheets/Tomato\\_Bacterial.htm](http://vegetablemndonline.ppath.cornell.edu/factsheets/Tomato_Bacterial.htm)  
Also found black rot in kale, a common bacterial disease in crucifers. The bacteria enters through hydathodes (natural openings in leaf edges) and causes V shaped lesions in leaves. It can look like a nutritional disorder in plants. In this plant, I found a lot of stem cankers as a result of the disease. This kale was in a warm, wet greenhouse. This disease is seed borne. For more info on black rot see: [http://vegetablemndonline.ppath.cornell.edu/factsheets/Crucifers\\_BR.htm](http://vegetablemndonline.ppath.cornell.edu/factsheets/Crucifers_BR.htm). Earwigs were found doing a lot of damage to peppers and other crops. Cabbage maggot damage seen in cabbage. Grower tilled in a cover crop too close to time of cabbage planting coupled with cool wet spring; the second planting was OK. Good news: no reports of late blight since the last incidence found in Maine on May 9.

## **RETAIL PRICE REPORTING COMING SOON**

(Beth Holtzman, UVM Extension)

The VT Direct Market Price Survey will be back in early July with new features to make it easier to report prices and view bi-weekly reports. The goal of the online reporting system is to help farmers share information about what they charge at direct markets so they can set prices that are fair to consumers while supporting farm profitability. Based on feedback on the 2010 pilot of the system, we are making programming improvements to streamline reporting. We invite all commercial growers who sell at direct markets in Vermont to participate. Reporting is voluntary, but the more reports we receive, the more valuable the information will be to farmers. You don't have report on every crop you sell. The email call for submitting prices will coincide with the email call for "reports from the field" for the Vermont vegetable and berry grower newsletter, approximately every two weeks during the growing season. This work is being funded by a grant from the USDA Northeast Center for Risk Management Education. We welcome your suggestions both on the pricing survey and on the kinds of pricing education that would be of most use to you; send your feedback to [newfarmer@uvm.edu](mailto:newfarmer@uvm.edu).

## **TWO WORKSHOPS ON JUNE 22**

Strawberry Production, at 5 pm, Jake and Liz Guest's Killdeer Farm, Norwich VT.

For details: <http://nofavt.org/events/strawberry-production-killdeer-farm>

Spinach, lettuce, beets, radishes, and other spring-planted crops, at 5:30 pm, High Mowing Seeds,

Wolcott. See: <http://www.uvm.edu/vtvegandberry/meetings/2011%20HMS%20Trials%20Walks.pdf>

## **SPRAYER CALIBRATION WORKSHOP JUNE 29**

Starting at 5 p.m. at Edgewater Farm, 99 River Rd, Plainfield NH. Dr. John Grande of Rutgers Univ. and George Hamilton of UNH Extension will present an informative and interactive workshop that will enable participants to select and calibrate backpack and mist sprayers for their operations. To register or for more info call 603-863-9200 or email [sherrie.laclair@unh.edu](mailto:sherrie.laclair@unh.edu). Two commercial and private pesticide credits will be given for this workshop.

## **ON FARM WORKSHOPS GALORE IN VERMONT THIS SEASON**

Links to dates and details: <http://www.uvm.edu/vtvegandberry/meetings/meetlist.html>