

## Vermont Vegetable and Berry News – June 23, 2009

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### LATE BLIGHT: HEADS UP

Late blight has been reported in a number of states to our south on both potato and tomato. It can travel long distances in a short time, and cool wet weather is conducive to infection. Please scout your fields carefully and often. It appears on potato or tomato leaves as pale green, water-soaked spots, often beginning at leaf tips or edges. The circular or irregular leaf lesions are often surrounded by a pale yellowish-green border that merges with healthy tissue. Lesions enlarge rapidly and turn dark brown to purplish-black. During periods of high humidity and leaf wetness, a cottony, white mold growth is usually visible on lower leaf surfaces at the edges of lesions. See the New England Vegetable Management Guide ([www.nevegetable.org](http://www.nevegetable.org)) for control options against this destructive disease. OMRI-listed copper materials that may provide some protection include Champ WG or NuCop 50WP.

### REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

(Hinesburg) The season has started slowly with the cool weather, but things are finally starting to grow. Lots of flowering on zucchini and summer squash, first few flowers on cukes and melons. Working in an old hay field that did not get adequate prep last summer (due to all the rain) has us fighting quack grass like crazy! But fewer pests this year so far due to cool weather and the field having been hay for years has no pest build up like traditional veggie fields.

(Cabot) We have onion maggot. Ordered some beneficial nematodes; we'll see. Seems like they're just pupating and getting ready for their second generation. Winter squash looking great under remay. Great crop of apples coming on. Pray for heat.

(Norwich) Pretty interesting spring. Some things really love the cool weather. Just finished mowing and bailing monster rye for straw; some was seven feet tall! Uncovered transplanted corn to find some of it beginning to tassel. Covers making huge difference this year. Putting out tricogramma for borer. Potatoes love this weather; plants are huge and producing unusually large set. Started digging this weekend. Zukes almost ready, cukes a bit further behind, but coming. Basil completely recovered from horrible start and picking lots -- I'm sure it was the slow mineralization of otherwise really nice compost. Clear plastic mulch on cucurbits really making a difference with the cloudy weather. So what happened to cucumber beetles and TPB... nowhere to be found. Very strange. And has anyone else had this plague of black aphids on everything?

(Montpelier) Well almost everything is in the ground. A few more things going in this week then it's time for the next wave. Cherry tomatoes are starting to show some color. Pepper plants are small but loaded with fruit. Cucumber beetles have finally arrived with the bit of heat we had last week. Eggplants just not looking happy. I appear to be having success controlling them with a cocktail of entrust and pyganic.

Garlic is producing scapes and generally looking great. A lot of yellow tips on the older leaves. Not sure what is causing that especially since I have really focused on fertility and side dressing this spring. Asparagus has been very slow this season, volume picking up the last week with the rain and heat. Beginning to think that it was not such a good idea leaving the mulch on the sides of the beds, kept the soil too cold. Cucumbers are fruiting as well as summer squash under remay. All in all things look very good but about 2 weeks behind due to the colder than normal temperatures. Chafer beetles starting to show up in one greenhouse and going after the basil. Population does not appear to be too high so I am going to spray with Entrust and get another round of nematodes into the soil. Demand continues to be good and steady.

(Salisbury NH) Shouldn't we be calling this reports from the pond? Luckily we're on a hill and our drainage is very good but this is ridiculous. We can't rub two days together to get sunshine. The strawberries are ripening only a few at a time and I'm worried they'll just rot. The broccoli looks great and our beets, lettuce and spinach is growing like crazy. Now the biggest problem is who will come out on a rainy day to buy them. Saw a few cucumber, tortoise and potato beetles. The seed potatoes we bought from The Maine Potato Lady are amazing. Strong growth and way ahead of the seed potatoes we bought from elsewhere even though the latter were planted 2 weeks before. We'll see how the yield compares. Wishing everyone some dry weather with 75-80 degrees!

(Royalton) The continued cold weather has kept the spinach and lettuce from bolting. Radishes, chard, radicchio, carrots, kohlrabi, broccoli, cauliflower, green garlic (just starting to scape now), spring onions, rhubarb, sage, parsley growing well. Our few strawberry plants are fruiting, though the apprentices are "keeping the rodents away" by devouring them first. Cucumber beetles and cabbage loopers are being fought presently; potato beetle eggs being smashed daily. Just barely keeping up with the galinsoga.

(Burlington) Spring has been its usual set of surprises. Bad flea beetle pressure on early brassicas this spring, despite the distinct lack of hot, dry weather that seems to encourage the beetles. Serious winter injury on strawberry crowns make the previous two banner years of strawberries seem like only a memory. While the cooler weather has slowed many things, we're on the verge of picking zucchini on schedule. Acquiring a new field with many intervening swales, wetlands, and trees between our existing land has given us a potato beetle advantage over prior years, where our limited rotation distance always made life difficult. With our first carrot bunches only a few weeks off, we're still enjoying reasonably flavored and crispy 'Yaya' November carrots from the walk-in. Pretty good for a non-storage cultivar!

(Tunbridge) Things were off to a great start and then they seemed to slow way down. Last year at this time we had zukes, and we thought we would have them again last Saturday, but they pretty much remained the same size all week. Over all things look good. Tater beetles enjoying themselves- hard to spray if chance of rain though. Planted the painted lady corn for the third time. I put a row cover over it this time. The crows ate everything last 2x times except the 5 corn next to the scare crow. Deer are walking through and making holes in my row covers. We got a small bottle of "invisible fence" and put some near one row of lettuce. They never touched that lettuce- Will have to check it out some more. Weeds doing well, hope to get in some nice dry productive weeding days this week. Nicest arugula ever this spring. All greens doing well this spring.

Started staking field tomatoes. It sounds like most folks don't bother with field tomatoes anymore, but if anyone has any hints on how to twine them without without remaining bent over for hours following I would like to know. It makes bean picking a walk in the park. Recommendation- last year we purchased a golf cart as a second field vehicle. We always laughed at our neighbor until he loaned us his for a few weeks. The employees love it. We put a small bed in the back and a lift kit for the wheels because of our hilly wet land. This will go to the top of the garden when it is too wet for the pickup truck. Our neighbor had gun rack on the front of his that was perfect for hoes. We have not added this yet, although it would be great, because then the scuffle hoes would always be with you when you needed them. A lot cheaper than a 4-wheeler or Mule type thing.

(Grand Isle) Greenhouse tomatoes are looking fine with the exception of two plants that were removed due to white mold. Pick your own strawberry season started on June 14th and folks have been out in force to pick regardless if the weather is sunny or raining. Later varieties like Idea are just barely starting to show some color, while the earlier varieties like Annapolis will be finished soon. We are sprucing up the farm for our 7th annual strawberry social with proceeds going to our local all volunteer ambulance service. Spring weather conditions were perfect for the six weeks of asparagus harvest. Spring spinach was some of the best we have had and the sweet williams are in full bloom with every possible shade of red and pink. Hats off to our great employees--certainly couldn't do much of this without their hard work and enthusiasm.

(Plainfield NH) So this is what it is like live in Seattle; we haven't had 3 days of full sun since Memorial Day. Strawberries are doing a little better than expected, the lettuce and greens look fabulous and the corn couldn't be worse. I have replanted once on my heavier ground already. In between we have some slightly chlorotic squash and cukes under remay that are blooming, field tomatoes are so-so, and thank goodness for the tomato greenhouses which are doing well, although they are quite late in coming on line for ripening. I have been working hard on my fertility, so I suspect some sun and heat would go a long way towards curing most of problems we are experiencing in the field. Greenhouse plants sales were very good this year, but maybe seeing a trend away from hanging plants? Farmstand business a little off, but the weather isn't really inspiring customers that much either.

(Guilford) Berries are holding up despite on/off rain. Potatoes and tomatoes vigorous; best dry beans we've grown. Deer just picking up the pressure after taking the spring off? It's a pain to wire everything with PYO going on but we're going to have to.

(Rochester, VT) Blueberries have set fruit with the exception of the Jersey variety which is still partly in blossom. The crop looks pretty good considering the challenges faced by the pollinators--too cold followed by too hot, and now too wet. Raspberries are in blossom, with fruit set in many places, and they are very vigorous in general. We could use some heat in this unusually cool June to bring them on. We have been infested with rose chafers again this year but are get after them earlier with organic sprays and hope to interrupt their reproductive cycle early enough to bring their numbers down next year. They are heavy in the wild raspberries in the adjacent forest which makes controlling them more of a challenge. They have chewed a few plants down to skeletons but the damage is limited. Our sour cherries flowered well this year and have fairly good fruit set, but getting them through damp weather will be the challenge as usual.

Winter burn in the blackberries was practically total and I think we need to replace them with another variety that can more reliably endure our Zone 3 cold. On the whole we have a decent crop and are looking forward to some actual warm weather now that is almost July!

(Wolcott) Nearly to the end of the big push to get all the squashes and cucumbers into the ground – just one variety of cucumbers still to go. Looks to be a bumper seed crop of chives and bunching onions this year – they're flowering to beat the band and we've managed to keep down the weeds in the beds. All this wet steamy weather makes me start worrying about fungal diseases, so it looks like we'll start doing sulfur sprays this week – earlier than we thought we'd need to. Finishing up with roguing the brassica seed crops for off-types (e.g. wrong leaf shape, wrong color, etc.), just getting started on the squashes.

(Amherst MA) The weather has turned very wet and very cloudy, bringing lots of waterlogged strawberries and few days to cultivate the fields. Luckily it's been so cold that the weeds and the crops haven't grown that much, so we're pretty clean in the field, despite being soaked. The strawberry season seems like it will be a general bust, but the greens, chinese cabbage, lettuce, chard, and spinach have all been bumpers. Early emergence of Colorado potato beetle called for a spraying with Spinosad/Pyganic last week - unfortunately the rain probably came too early to make it totally effective. We also have a lot of grey/black aphids on the Chenopodia (beet greens, spinach, chard) - they seem to wash off (mostly) but the bug pressure in some places is huge.

(Plainfield NH) Steady cultivation through the month of June, that is our motto. Lots of little weeds, potentially ruinous. We are keeping up OK for now, using every cultivation method and tool. Greenhouse cherry tomatoes are flowering like mad and need to be pruned and trained often. Greenhouse peppers are blooming; field peppers are not quite yet. Spraying: for cucumber beetles, cabbage moth, TPB in late strawberries. No Potato Bugs yet. Looks like a good strawberry crop, but late.