



Vermont Vegetable and Berry News – June 3, 2014  
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## REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

(Tunbridge) things are growing slow and steady. We have row covers on something's we usually do not cover such as some of the onions to move them along. Hoping that by the time we plant the winter squash we can remove some row covers, as we are in need of those hoops. First spinach crop was beautiful. Lettuce in the field not quite there. Pigeons ate a lot of peas after they sprouted and we had to cover them. We are trying for a nice supper of pigeon and morels, but so far we only have the morels.

(Waterbury) Garlic is looking good this year, plants are strong and vibrant. Had quite a few "doubles" (two plants in one hole) this year. In the past we always just pulled one plant and used it as "green" garlic. We have started transplanting the extra plant into an empty hole in the row. If the conditions are right the transplant seems to do well and produce a nice bulb.

(Cambridge) Now that the blueberries are finally leafing out I'm seeing more winter damage than I've ever had. A lot of the smaller branches just didn't make it through. Overall the bushes will be fine but are getting a hard pruning to remove all the dead material. It was a cold winter but we've had colder so I'm not sure why there was so much die-back. There are still plenty of flowers and the bumble bees are busy at work but there won't be nearly the epic fruit set of last summer. Garlic is looking good so far, though a little more sun would be helpful. I have been growing mostly 'Red Russian' and 'Georgia Fire' but invested in a few pounds of 'Music' last fall to see if I couldn't build up some stock. The heads were huge with just 4 enormous cloves apiece. Since they have come up the plants are noticeably larger than the other varieties. Now I wish I had a whole field of 'Music'.

(Warren) I made the decision not to push early spring high tunnel greens in favor of concentrating on field work and planting. In theory the crops I've planted in the movable tunnels back in March will generate the same amount of revenue, just later on and make the spring that much less hectic. Both seem to be true but it really puts a pinch on the cash flow. That said, everything looks good with the first greens harvests starting later this week. Peas and carrots from high tunnels are enjoying the sunlight outside and will be ready for the first CSA pickup.

I'm hoping that wholesale marketing will be a lot easier this year since I have no new markets and we all know the drill so to speak. Onions on silver mulch are looking good. I know they are growing slower than if they were on black but the almanac calls for a hot August and it seems like so many of the onion diseases are brought on by hot moist soil conditions. I think the production cost on onions is one of the highest we have and I can't afford to lose another crop. So far I have had one good one in 4 years.

(Londonderry) Winter collapsed hoop house rebuilt and covered! Other house planted out with our own blight free heirloom cherry tomatoes. Mikes cherry bomb, Anjali fun gold, Japanese black cherry and Funky green striped. Delicata is out and happy. Salad mix and other cutting greens on way to second harvest; making weekly seedings. Heavy flea beetle pressure hit arugula. Covertan laid out after diatomaceous earth application. Many requests for our superior bedding pants leading to strong on farm sales! Irrigation system overhaul complete next week. Have not needed yet. Perfect rain/ sun mix at 1,200 ft.

(Fairfield) At about 900' elevation we harvest the first ripe strawberries from the high tunnel on May 31. Later blueberry variety finally blooming. North side of Bali cherries are still only slowly breaking bud. Outdoor plantings finally starting to show faster growth. Even kale and broccoli have been slow; 3-4 sets of leaves on garlic.

(Fairfax) Things we have done right: rowcover, rowcover, rowcover. Things we have done wrong: anything we didn't cover with rowcover. Crops are coming along nicely, finally full bloom on the early berries. We have gone to black plastic for kale and seeding the middles with annual rye grass. It is like a kale park. We tried it last year and with the success were doing more of it. We mow with a walk behind brush hog, but looking to get a self-propelled string trimmer to do it. Were now putting annual rye between most all our plastic especially peppers. Prevents any soil splashing. We seed it with a push or pull Scott's drop spreader.

(Plainfield NH) We have only seen one cooler spring where the strawberries were this late and it was sometime back in the early 80's. As of June first we are in full bloom; some years we have been in full bloom by May 15. Yet this is the first time in our 38 years of strawberry growing that we are going to get through bloom without irrigating for frost control. The field corn that gets planted in late April/early May down here is no bigger than my first planting of sweet corn planted May 13, despite having much more vigor. However, the cool weather and adequate moisture have allowed us to get caught up transplanting and row covering. Recent heat spawned a flush of weeds that we went after with baskets, tine weeder and some ancient iron hooked onto our steerable cultivator. Awaiting new Kress tools for that unit in hope it will enable to allow us to reduce herbicide use on our more problematic crops like carrots and onions, and perhaps corn.

There is good flower set on strawberries and blueberries, but I have learned to temper my enthusiasm with skepticism regarding how weather can treat you in the late innings of the season. Will try to do a little side dressing and consider another fungicide application on the strawberries before weather gets cloudy and damp later in the week.

(Westfield) The season was off to a late start. Plant sales have been strong. The strawberries for 2015 are being planted this week under black plastic which will help with weed control. This year's strawberry crop looks weak and irregular; ice caused a lot of damage this winter. We are planting squash. We have had a great and still have a great harvest of spinach.

(S. Royalton) Despite it being a late spring the soil has warmed fast and the crabgrass is germinating already. Winter squash is going in today which is the last of the warm season crops all the rest in and covered. Flea beetles are out in force but not many cucumber beetles yet. Still harvesting kale and chard from last fall's planting; it's bolting but still tastes great. Spinach from February seeding transplanted into tunnels is bolting now; Emu and Corvair lasted the longest before bolting.

(Plainfield) Just took the row covers off the kale, and have had enough dry sunny weather to get the weeds killed. Hurray for Lilliston cultivators and good hired help. Used the tine weeder on potatoes and onions, worked fine. Selling lots of seedlings. Seems that household food gardens are back in style. Peppers under row cover are just sitting there, so far. At least they are not being hauled off by cutworms, as sometimes happens. In-ground greenhouse plantings are almost all completed. Fall-planted strawberries look great. Using cover crops to restrain my tendency to plant more than I really want to manage. Ready to set winter squash and corn plugs. Sure hope we get the rain needed to get them settled.

(Huntington) I am grateful for the weather of the last 5 weeks. The Spring push is work enough without fighting soggy fields, and a nice Spring like this is a welcome contrast to 2013. Our garlic is two weeks behind (but looking good), made all the more noticeable by some mid-September-seeded rye already flowering in the next block over. We abandoned silver mulch for our onions after two sub-par years with cold Spring soils under the metallized plastic, and this year's crop is looking much better as a result. We had a successful second half of the greenhouse heating season using our new Maxim 250 pellet boiler. We fired it up for the first time on April 20, and we have it set up to heat our 26'x96' starter house as well as put a bit of supplemental heat into a 30'x96' house. I definitely prefer the smell of pellets burning to the sound of propane trucks slipping in the mud, and the direct fuel cost savings are significant. We burned 2 tons of pellets (~\$245/T) between 4/20 and June 1 and kept the 26'x96' house heated to 64F at night. The only thing now is I want to put in a shop or some root storage across the farm road from the greenhouses so I can use the boiler in the November-February time frame and help spread out the cost a bit further.

(Jericho) We are loving the cucumbers, tomatoes, beans, snap peas, zucchini, summer squash and basil coming out of our new minimally heated hoop house with in-ground heat. Fun for us and exciting for our customers at market and CSA. Learning just how tall cucumbers can grow. Field crops have been a few weeks behind due to cold April, but are catching up now. Tried to cram 2 months of field work into one and are just now about to crawl out of the hole - great crew is working hard and keeping us on track.

(S. Burlington) Despite the incredible slow regrowth start to my overwintered kale and cilantro, once it got going, the yields this April and May have been great. My overwintered spinach is just being ripped out now and yielded best ever, albeit delayed. Of course that means all summer crops are slow to get in which means I will have to rip them when they are at their peak in order to get winter crops in on time in Aug/Sept. Awesome May weather has been much appreciated!

(New Boston NH) In Hillsborough County NH we are off to slow start. Despite getting quite a bit of the early plantings in (onions and potatoes, peas, carrots,) heavy rains and cool temps have slowed our planting progress which paid off when what could have been a catastrophic hail storm with dime sized hail pummeled our farm. While it did lay our peas flat (they bounced back) most of the field was covered in remay or just planted and small enough to escape serious damage. Will begin harvesting Pac Choi, radishes and other minor crops. Second round of cultivation and first hilling/sidressing of potatoes done. Most growth is sluggish due to the cold night temps. Have purchased multiple rolls of 50' x 1000' row cover to spur on growth. Thankful I can still use Chilean nitrate this season! We sure need it!

(Westminster West) They really don't make things (tractors) like they used to. The lift lever that raises and lowers the 3pt hitch broke off of my brand new tractor with all of 3 hours on it broke, due to a crappy factory weld. Luckily a friend that welds things fixed it within an hour and I was good to go, but not before I ranted against the crap that gets sold to farmers compared to "The old days!" In better news, fields are finally drying out so our long delayed field crops can go in. Potatoes went in today, latest I have ever planted them; winter squash will start to get transplanted tomorrow. A new water wheel transplanter should allow it all to go quicker with the creeper gears on the new tractor if that doesn't break! Plant sales are screaming along with things selling out weeks before we had planned. That's good news, bad news, as I hate disappointing so many customers. Farmers' market sales have picked up with warmer dryer weather and wholesale accounts saying they are seeing booming sales due to the neonicotinoids found in commercial plants at the box stores, which is driving customers to seek independent stores that sell local and organic plants. No cucumber beetles yet but did a few flea beetles on brassicas. Greenhouse tomatoes are growing great.

(Hampton NY) Planting completed and now weed control and irrigation set-up begins. Soil temps are still in the mid 60's with good soil moisture although the wind is beginning to dry things out. Very few grubs and many worms found this year when transplanting. Some black cut worm damage in the peppers. Spinach and Swiss chard are growing slow. Carrots and beets are beginning to make an appearance. Green beans are up and growing well; yellow beans going in this week.

(Little Compton RI) June 1<sup>st</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> and October 1<sup>st</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> are becoming my two panic flat-out times of year. Deadlines to get stuff done or suffer the consequences is very stressful. I know it seems implausible to everyone north of the Mohawk Trail, but southern New England is very dry. We are dodging around our different pieces of land and making decisions not so much on worries about deer pressure but whether there is enough moisture to give things a good start. Markets are doing well but couldn't afford to put too much into greenhouse fuel to have us deep into tomatoes just yet. We are in love with the Kreher's high potassium chicken fertilizer. Grows great tomatoes! That extra calcium and potassium are really making a difference.

(Weare NH) Tunnel is almost transitioned to summer crops. Field planting is still a week behind, but getting caught up slowly. Garlic looks great. Kale a bit slow in coming along. Most greens and herbs look great. Biggest pest so far: grasshoppers.

#### UPDATE FROM THE UVM PLANT DIAGNOSTIC CLINIC – Ann Hazelrigg

Transplant shock/cold stress type symptoms are being seen in samples of crops like tomato, basil, cukes, peppers. When I see a plant where the bottom leaves are yellowing or have brown dead spots between the veins AND the new growth looks good chalk it up to these abiotic stresses. Could be the plants ran out of water on a sunny day in the GH; you planted things out too early in cool soils; or the night temps got too low. If the new growth does NOT look good and is yellowing or spotting, check the root systems to be sure your problem is not originating there. I have seen root rots in spinach, pepper and others; when soils stay wet and cool, the fungi that cause these root rots become active, especially since the plants are not actively growing in those conditions. Clay soils make the whole thing worse.

UVM is participating with UMASS and RI to do some field scouting and reporting in vegetables. We are scouting Intervale Community Farm and Jericho Settlers Farm every other week. We report the results to UMASS and they will put them in the Pest Alerts newsletter section, <http://extension.umass.edu/vegetable/publications/vegetable-notes-newsletter/archives>. Mollie Klepack and Anya Rose will be doing a lot of the scouting this summer. I will pull out the pertinent info for VT and send out through this newsletter. Will send info immediately if there is a really time sensitive problem like late blight.

So far, we have been catching onion maggot adults for the past few weeks. If you are noticing your onions declining and not thriving, check for the maggot in the root system.

<https://extension.umass.edu/vegetable/insects/onion-maggot> . This pest has 3 generations in VT but the first is the worst and the first flight is pretty much over now. Growers have reported some success with nematodes, but not sure it is worth it now, definitely not worth it if you are not able to irrigate often since the nematodes won't thrive in dry soils. Not seeing much cabbage maggot but look for the same type symptoms in brassicas. Flea beetle damage on the rise, especially where row covers have been pulled off the brassicas. Watch for cucumber beetle damage. Use kaolin clay as a transplant dip or field spray to discourage feeding if your plants aren't under row cover now. Early control is very important.

<https://extension.umass.edu/vegetable/insects/cucumber-beetle-striped>

If you have a problem, try sending pictures and an email first: [ann.hazelrigg@uvm.edu](mailto:ann.hazelrigg@uvm.edu). Samples can also be sent to PDC, Jeffords Hall, 63 Carrigan Drive, UVM, Burlington, 05405. Call if you need to (802)656-0493.

#### PLEASE SEND IN BASIL DOWNY MILDEW SAMPLES

Basil Downy Mildew was reported on overwintered, potted sweet basil plants in an unheated high tunnel in Virginia the first week of May. This pathogen requires a living host, and survived on the plants over winter. In the Northeast, keep an eye out for signs of basil downy mildew on seedlings from the south. Symptoms can look like nitrogen deficiency, but the leaf yellowing is interveinal, and sooty grey/black patches on lower leaf surfaces are the spores. The Plant Pathology Laboratory at the University of Massachusetts is conducting a study of the genetics of downy mildew on basil, which could help with management in the future. Samples are needed! Whole plants or cuttings from either basil or coleus, as the causal organisms are similar. For info on submitting samples, please contact Angela Madeiras at: [ammadeir@umass.edu](mailto:ammadeir@umass.edu)