



Vermont Vegetable and Berry News – June 7, 2011

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<http://www.uvm.edu/vtvegandberry>

REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

(Burlington) Thanks to all of you farms around Vermont that sent some replacement seedlings our way. We and the neighboring farms in the Intervale are very appreciative. Looking forward to a week of warmer, drier weather and descending lake levels.

(Barnet) It's hard to believe, but we have our field put back together only a week and a half after that almighty flood. Many thanks to all who donated transplants and to those who came out to help us clean up the mess left in the flash flood's wake. Strawberries dug out and hosed off from 4 inches of mud seem to be doing fine. Spinach and tomatoes not buried still died two to three days later in spite of our cleaning efforts. Lettuce and onions are doing well after their stint underwater. A neat side effect of the flood seems to be a dramatic decrease in weed pressure from grasses. Maybe it was the suffocating mud or simply the late season restart of the field. We are also enjoying the 12 inches of sand newly deposited in the upper corner of the field. It must have eddied out somehow at the high spot. Not sure what to do with it other than play horseshoes.

(Plainfield NH) While many are recovering from flash floods or still unable to plant the heavier ground, we have been grinding out hours irrigating. Still trying to get stuff in the ground and the weather is forecasting 90's soon, compounding problems on our light soils. I expect we will be in the thick of picking strawberries by June 9 as well. Second year bearing beds are suffering from infestations of Asian garden beetle grub damage to the root initials. The conventional weapon is neonicotinoid so have been looking into a nematode called *Heterohabditis biosphora* (?) but there are no science based recommendations that I can find on the web and it costs about \$1500 an acre to apply. If anyone has had any problems with AGB and has some suggestions I would love to hear from you. Greenhouse sales have held up well since Memorial Day and finally seeing some daylight in the greenhouses. Demand for vegetable transplants is still on the upswing. Blueberries have set with a medium fruit set and new shoot growth looks good (until the scarab beetles show up) and brambles have good fruit set on what remained after pruning off extensive winter damage. Flea beetles busy here on the brassicas; sprayed for hornworms after a few of the red eyed monster moths showed up here. Settling in for another hot dry summer which officially begins when the cedar waxwings arrive.

(Hoosick Falls NY) Finally getting some field work done and the greenhouses have recovered from the fungus that the overly wet weather produced. We had managed to get early potatoes and onions in on time. Some potatoes rotted in low areas, but are otherwise blooming. The onions are on Biotello raised beds in a field that had standing water between beds after we planted them, they are healthy and thriving, all started from seed. The first transplants that we got out are doing well, should have some kale and chard soon, and we are picking lettuce now. All the transplants that we have in holding, while we struggle to finish ear corn seeding and start hay, are healthy though some are leggy we are happy given the circumstances, no regrets that we started them late.

(Wolcott) With all the wet we're quite behind in planting; in most years we can see the end in sight by now. Everything is at least a week late, some things two. Overall we're still hopeful for a good season, though; we've had plenty of heat, if not a lot of dry. This week looks like the heat is returning once more after the weekend cool stretch. The cucumber beetles have been really bad in the greenhouse this year, but a spray of Surround and Entrust seems to have knocked them way back.

(Salisbury NH) Too much to do already. Transplants to get into the ground, new seedlings to replace items already picked; good sales so far. First almost two weeks of rain, then several days of gale force winds, now dry, hot sunny weather. We don't have irrigation so it really hurts. Radishes were really damaged by root maggot. Flea beetles settled into the hoop house which is just about the time it's too hot for anything in there anyway. Never enough spinach. People always ask for it. Strawberries might survive the dreaded TPB this year. Last year we lost almost 100% of the crop. Raspberries look very good; no winter kill. Blueberries are good too even though we pruned them hard. Now we just need rain to plump them up. String beans up about 4 inches. Could use more water to really speed growth.

(Argyle NY) I talked to a farmer who has farmed 74 years last week, and he said this is the worse spring he has ever seen. It's been our most challenging too though we've only farmed for 23 years. Too wet, cover crops huge, greenhouse transplants growing and wanting field space, then too hot and irrigation not up and running. Needing more help, but college kids are starting now, so hopefully we can get transplanting back on track, cultivate, and move on. On the bright side, our strawberry crop is wonderful with the annual bed Chandler variety; nicest ever and the netting is keeping the birds out. Early peas are stressed, even in the raised beds, but the later plantings look okay; 90's again this week so we'll see. Lettuce is abundant, we are out of the high tunnels and cutting in the fields. Preparing for the Covington sweet potato shoots that will be arriving soon; they'll be happy with the 90's and we hope to have another great year with them for winter market sales. During the wet period, we learned that the wheels on the water wheel (attached to the axle) can be rolled across the field very nicely with 2 people. We had gotten the Biotello laid down in a mad rush when it dried enough, but it was too wet to put the tractor on the field, so that saved a lot of labor by marking the rows, then we hand-planted 20,000 + onion & shallot plants!

ON FARM WORKSHOPS

NOFA-VT and the Vermont Vegetable and Vermont Berry Growers Assn. are pleased to present a diverse set of workshops this season. Mark your calendars! Recordkeeping and Whole Farm Planning for Farms with Multiple Crops and Employees, Riverberry Farm, Fairfax, June 16 at 3 pm. Strawberry Production at Killdeer Farm, Norwich, June 22 at 5 pm. Marketing Basics for New Growers, The Last Resort, Monkton, July 5 at 4 pm. Blueberries and Raspberries for Commercial Growers, Sunshine Berry Farm, Rochester, July 12 at 5 pm. Cooling Systems at Jericho Settlers Farm, Jericho, July 20 at 3:30 pm. Vegetable and Berry IPM for Commercial Growers, Littlewood Farm, Plainfield, August 1 at 5 pm. Irrigation Systems at Harlow Farm, Westminster, August 30 at 4 pm. Potato Production, Foote Brook Farm, Johnson, September 12 at 4:30 pm. For details go to: <http://nofavt.org/annual-events/summer-workshops/index> or call 802-434-4122.

RAFFL WORKSHOPS FOR GROWERS

The Rutland Area Farm and Food Link has teamed up with NOFA-VT to bring you six on-farm workshops on topics and skills important to farm success. Workshops are relevant for any commercial grower, from apprentices to start ups to established farmers: Basic Cover Crop Strategies for Soil Health and Seed Production and NOFAvore Social, July 27, Clearbrook Farm, Shaftsbury at 4 pm. Worry-Less Winter Production (including a potluck picnic) Kilpatrick Family Farm, Aug. 22, Middle Granville NY, at 1:30 pm pre-registration required. Equipment and Tools for Small Scale Vegetable Production, Foggy Meadow Farm, Sept. 7, Benson at 6 pm. Call RAFFL 802-417-1528, or visit <http://www.rutlandfarmandfood.org/> for more info.

STRAWBERRY PEST UPDATE

(adapted from UMaine strawberry IPM newsletter)

Early varieties and plants that were under row covers in southern Maine (and VT) are now just past bloom, with primary flowers starting to size into green fruit. Later varieties are mostly in bloom this week. The mix of hot and cold weather recently has made it challenging to predict when the crop will be ready, but it still looks as though it may only be a day or two behind a “normal” season. Although we have seen increased strawberry clipper activity in most of the fields scouted this week, many fields are beyond the growth stage (blossoms in bud stage) where clipper poses a threat. Once beds are in full bloom, clipper will not be able to cause economic harm. However, fields not yet in full bloom should continue to be scouted. The control threshold is 1.3 or more buds clipped per 2 foot of row. Tarnished plant bugs continue to be relatively scarce but we did find nymphs in some fields, and one field was over the threshold of 4 or more infested flower clusters per 30 sampled. Warm weather will likely bring about an increase in TPB activity and flowers remain susceptible to feeding injury even after petal fall. Page 115 of the 2010-11 New England Small Fruit Pest Management Guide (www.umass.edu/fruitadvisor/pdf/2010NESmallFruitGuide.pdf) has more information on materials labeled for strawberry pests. Apply any pesticides at night so they pose the least threat to pollinators. Two-spotted spider mites appear to be kept in check by the cool weather so far. Most fields had no mites or were well below the spray threshold of 25% of leaves infested. Keep scouting in as it gets warmer. Spittlebug masses are appearing in some strawberry beds and though they don't pose a significant threat to plants they can create an annoyance for pickers; they tend to be worse in weedy fields. Slugs may be a problem in some fields this season due to moist conditions. They usually feed at night, leaving large holes and tunnels in ripening fruit. Baits offer some control but should be used prior to fruit ripening; they should also be applied to in mid-September if slugs have been a problem, to reduce egg-laying.