



University of Vermont

Extension

College of Agriculture and Life Sciences

## **Vermont Vegetable and Berry Grower News – July 1, 2025**

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

### **REPORTS FROM THE FIELD**

**(Westminster)** The recent heat caused some tip burn in our newly planted lettuce but we're hoping it grows out of that. We harvested some larger lettuce in advance to avoid some of the problem. The heat also made it difficult to get out and work, but fortunately we're pretty well caught up on field work.

Kale and collards look good, in spite of a little woodchuck damage in the Lacinata. There's been some flea beetles in the kale, but we haven't had problems with disease. Sweet corn started out worrisomely slow, but it's caught up now, and we should be picking in two to three weeks. We'll start picking bunched beets soon.

Strawberries are done; the rain and heat moved them along quickly and we started to see some rot. And we began late, too, so it was a short season, but a good one – once they got going, the berries came thick and fast.

So far, the season hasn't been too bad.

**(Marlboro)** Not counting chickens, but the blueberry crop looks as good as we have seen. Now we need a SWD season like last year to get a decent percentage of them to the shelves. We do have about 1/4 of them covered with SWD netting and that has been great for the late season.

We finally netted the black raspberries for birds because birds (mostly robins) have been eating most of the berries. We don't remember this from years ago. Trying some Himbo Top red raspberries, will see how they survive the wet weather we get more of these days.

**(Grand Isle)** Blueberries are ripening nicely. We can't seem to get a handle on controlling cranberry fruit worm. Unsure if the issue is our spray timing or another issue. Captured more males in the monitor traps this year compared to previous years. Currently hand picking and destroying any damaged fruit. Japanese beetles are starting to emerge. Pollinator counts were good this year, and we had a few honeybees which we have not seen in a few years.

**(Cabot)** For two years in a row strawberries start off great. Each plant has 8 to 10 buds. Great rain cool and sun. Then the little berries turn a tan color. That is end of game. I get a few; 600 hundred pounds off of 7 acres. Also, weeds are extra tall.

**(Guildhall)** Potato planting started 5/28 but didn't wrap up until 6/18. Did a few things different this year planting wise. We used a liquid "pop-up" fertilizer alongside our granular fertilizer. Give the plants immediately accessible nutrients so that they can get roots over to granular faster. We also did a pre-emergent spray of a calcium product.

Lots of new varieties this year: a numbered red variety from Cornell, 3 varieties of fingerlings, 3 specialty varieties, a new European salad white, plus the usual golds.

A downside this year was seed quality. Our chipping seed was of good quality, but the grower shipped us entirely chefs, very big chefs at that, which made for less eyes per piece. Out of 7 totes (3k per) of russet seed only 2 totes weren't rotten, and 5 had to be chucked. And then, perhaps our most important variety, Natasha gold, of which we planned to plant 30 acres (so a whole semi of seed) was shipped with a new genetic disease (?) called "Mahogany Browning." The outside of the potato looks great but inside has a reddish-brown tinge in a pattern like the gel in tomato quarters. The redness eventually goes pithy and forms air pockets like an over-ripe radish. 1 out of 5 tubers exhibited it. We were only able to find replacement seed for half, so we tried culling the infection off the seed cutter, planted 11 acres, but it looks like it'll be a 50% stand. Seed is just rotting in the ground.

Most of the pumpkins were planted on Memorial Day and they look better than most years, so far.

**(Plainfield NH)** Full bore strawberry season here. Fruit size is off. Tissue testing shows lack of fertility, but we have put upwards to 60 lbs./A of N on them just this spring to counteract the effects of excessive rainfall. Cold soils perhaps inhibiting plant uptake of nutrients? Some varieties have anthracnose which is usually not a serious problem, and it now seems to be abating. This year we also see a large thrips population in the strawberry field and wondering how concerned we should be, I guess we will just monitor it and decide post-renovation.

We are getting leek moth in the onions and garlic; we are told at threshold levels. The annual appearance of SCB is starting a bit late for us this year.

Farmstand sales are strong, greenhouse sales did well, considering every weekend was a literal washout out. The home gardeners were pretty determined; we were surprised how many came in the pouring rains to get plant starts.

**(Little Compton RI)** Our early and mid-season strawberries ended the day before the extreme heat, thank goodness. Greenhouse tomatoes have Botrytis drop problems which we are fighting back with baking soda and Oxidate. Next year we will install blower tubes to keep air flowing up from between the rows.

Stale seed beds are a must this year with extra moisture and extra high temps. We have lost countless crops that disappeared before we could weed them properly. We seem perpetually two weeks behind but finally got in our main potato crop and winter squash planted.

Farmers markets are all about credit cards; cash has all but disappeared! But the average patron hasn't batted an eye at higher prices so far.

Value added, custom kitchen products are getting great reception! The trend in healthier food options seems to be drawing in willing customers who in years past may have sought cheaper alternatives! Example: garlic scape pesto has a profit margin of 300% and we can't make enough.

We bought a Wizard Seeder three years ago that has been a great asset, but there is a learning curve. The seeder is a quarter the cost of the MaterMac but needs careful attention to avoid problems. The seeder has 3 fly wheels with 2 bearings each. These can fail even with mild use. You should get 6 extra bearings to have on hand to avoid down time in mid-season. They only cost \$7.50. Also, once you hear the bearings go, don't keep seeding because if over-heated the plastic bearing support will melt! Joe at Sutton Ag. is knowledgeable on the machine. We also had problems with pelleted seed cracking and white dusty clay building up in the vacuum chamber. When you buy pelleted seeds, immediately give them a hard squeeze between your fingers and if they crumble easily, send them back!

**(Argyle NY)** Thankfully there is a wide range of resilience built into a farm to handle the swings of the weather. Being heavy winter growers, a lot of summer type vegetables get delayed inevitably, but this year due to rains and a scant crew we are running even later. Today, we are finally getting our potatoes planted and our leeks and onions got planted 2 weeks ago! 3 weeks ago we got our pole beans planted in the tunnel.

Tarnished plant bug and cucumber beetles are having their year and giving us a run for our money. Already seeing powdery mildew on zucchini in the tunnels.

Last year we switched from outside bush beans to 3 tunnel plantings that continuously bore till frost with weekly fertigation. Amazing labor and space savings. Thinking about spoon feeding every week on many crops is a game changer

Strawberry crop from the annual bed system in which we grow Chandler was one of our best ever, with two sections in the high tunnel yielding about 7-10 days earlier. They always cause a labor issue but this year a plea to customers gave us some very needed help on critical weeks with June being a challenge of long to do list.

We experimented with leaving 2 rows of dahlia bulbs in the ground all winter with a low unseated tunnel over them (14x100 farmer's friend style) and 2 to 4 layers of row cover and it was a huge success with dahlias starting to flower May 1st!

We used some Monnit devices to monitor the temp under the covers and even with air temp well below zero a few times, the ground never froze or damaged the shallow tubers. Saved a lot of work.

Onions were another beautiful, overwintered crop on the steamed beds in high and low tunnels. Huge and beautiful, selling well. Still trying to slow down with more buying of quality, local organic produce for our online store, so making it work another season to serve our customers of almost 40 years. Our daughter's cut flower business is also doing well as she continues to partner with us and work full time to keep our farm running and profitable.

Online sales continue to be strong. We are still looking for a special person to help run this farm over the next few years so we can reduce hours and semi-retire! Not sure how many young folks want to start farming though the lifestyle for a family has many advantages and we would not have traded it for another career.

## **ADAPTING TO FLOODING, AND WHOLESALE VEGETABLE PRODUCTION**

**Tuesday July 22, 4:00-6:30 pm**

**River Berry Farm, 191 Goose Pond Rd, Fairfax, VT 05454**

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).*

River Berry Farm is a certified organic farm owned and operated by Jane Sorensen and David Marchant since 1992. Located along the Lamoille River they grow 50 acres of vegetables, 3 acres of strawberries, 1.5 acres of raspberries and 18,000 square feet of greenhouse plants. They primarily sell wholesale, and they have a farm stand for spring plant sales, with pick-your-own for the bulk of fruit sales. Parts of the farm have frequently flooded, so over the years David and Jane have changed the use of some fields, planted riparian buffers, and participated in crop insurance. They will describe their experience with these practices. We'll also tour fields of wholesale cabbage, carrots and kale, getting an overview of production practices and learning about marketing through the Deep Root Organic Cooperative. UVM Extension and NRCS-VT folks will be on hand to add to the conversation.

## **STRAWBERRY RENOVATION GUIDANCE**

Evan Lentz, University of Connecticut Extension

It's just about that time. June-bearing strawberry renovation needs to occur directly after harvest ends. Renovation helps to maintain orderly plantings and walkways, reduces disease and insect pressures, and stimulates runner and flower bud formation.

1) Mow off the tops of your plants carefully to leave the crowns intact. This will remove and destroy any diseased foliage as well as destroy a habitat for insect pests.

2) Narrow beds with a rototiller/cultivator. This will remove excess runners and vegetative growth as well as improve air flow and light penetration.

3) Thin plants – for older plantings (3+ years) that have gotten too dense. Again, this helps to increase air flow and light penetration.

4) Fertilize – you want to focus on applying enough nitrogen directly after renovation, 30-50 lbs./acre. A second application should be made in late August, 30-40 lbs./acre. If

you have done a soil or foliar test, you may also need to apply other nutrients at this time. Please reach out if you need a recommendation for materials to apply, organic or conventional.

5) Weed Management – Immediately after mowing, pre-emergent can be used to keep weed pressure down. Organic growers will need to utilize contact herbicides. Caution should be taken not to hit newly renovated plants. Hand cultivation can continue as the season progresses to avoid competition with the newly renovated plants. For a list of materials please refer to the New England Small Fruit [Management Guide](#).

6) Irrigation – Plants need a steady source of water throughout this process and afterwards. 1- 2” of water per week is sufficient. This will help plants to develop, acquire nutrients, and will set you up nicely for next year.

## HIGH TUNNEL NEWSLETTER

The latest issue of “High and Dry, Growing Vegetables in Northern New England High Tunnels” is available [here](#). Topics covered: growing peppers and eggplants, trellising tomatoes, managing tomato pith necrosis, and reports of early season grasshopper damage.

## FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR FARMERS

**August 22, 2025, is the deadline to apply for Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) Vermont programs for 2026 (CSP, EQIP, AMA, RCPP).** Simply complete the [Conservation Program Application](#) and return it to your local [USDA service center](#). Submitting this application does not commit you to participating, it just indicates your interest in working with an NRCS planner to explore which programs and practices are right for you.

**Vermont Farmers Ecosystem Stewardship Program Payment (CSP-Assist).** The Vermont Agency of Agriculture Food and Markets offers a \$2,000 payment for completing a CSP Assessment with NRCS. If you are awarded and sign a CSP contract, you will receive an additional payment up to \$7,500. August 22, 2025, is the deadline to complete the one-page application/authorization. Funding is available on a first-come, first-served basis. More information is on the [VAAFMM web site](#).

Want help with funding opportunities for your farm? Contact Rachel Stievater at [rachel.stievater@uvm.edu](mailto:rachel.stievater@uvm.edu) (NRCS questions) or Julie Callahan at [julie.callahan@uvm.edu](mailto:julie.callahan@uvm.edu) (general funding questions).

## **NOFA-VT ON-FARM WORKSHOPS**

To view the listing of a dozen events on a diversity of topics, held around the state from July-September, click [here](#).