



Vermont Vegetable and Berry News – July 20, 2010

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

REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

(Craftsbury) Love the hot weather. I'm convinced this farm could produce twice as much produce if it were consistently hot. Crops looking great. Never cease to be amazed by the how easy it is to grow crops in land that was recently in sod. No weeds, great fertility, few pest problems.

(Brandon) Summer crops coming in nicely. Corn from transplants that went through hard mid May frosts recovered decently, but had more smaller ears than usual. Second transplanting that just missed that cold spell has been beautiful and heavy yielding. Earworm traps are now up, as moths recently showed up south of here. Leafhoppers burning our spuds and beans, but otherwise those crops love the mix of heat and moisture. Greenhouse crops doing well, with European cucumbers proving to be worth the effort and space. Yield has been excellent, and they have gained a strong legion of farmstand fans. Peak vents, or shade cloth on conventional roll up side house, have helped get greenhouse crops through the mega heat earlier without any fruit damage. Always nice this time of year as some crop seedings and plantings are last ones for season, kind of relaxing.

(Royalton) No sign of disease in summer squashes yet; some wilt in melons and winter squash, but heavy fruit set. Tomatoes are looking great as are potatoes. Direct seeded corn will be ripe next week, broccoli and cauliflower just about done (planted in April out in the field). Seeded second rounds of cilantro and dill. Dry beans are producing well; French filet beans have Mexican beetles on them. Rhubarb is still producing. Artichokes overwintered from last fall are producing well. All the garlic has been harvested and is drying, about two weeks earlier than last year.

(Shaftsbury) Despite being dry as a chip, our crops are looking okay; not the stellar year everyone else seems to be having. Sweet corn looks good, but other things are growing slowly. Lots of leafhoppers on spuds and beans. Squash producing well as are cukes. We planted sweet onions in a different field from our storage onions this year as the sweets always get diseased first and spread it to the storage. It has paid off this year as the sweets are infected with downy mildew right now, but the storage look great! Garlic crop a disappointment this year after 2 stellar years. The law of averages rules again.

(Starksboro) I've had a lot of striped cucumber beetles this year. I'm used to ignoring them once the squash plants have gotten past the first few leaves. This year they are taking quite a toll in the mature zucchini plants. Since they are not usually on my radar once the plants get going I didn't catch them as soon as I ought to have and yield is significantly affected. However the cucumbers are doing very well and the summer squash isn't half bad either. In general crops are doing well.

(Plainfield NH) Despite strong farm stand sales, the heat has made it difficult to accomplish anything on the farm, and the vegetables are responding poorly as well. The succession plantings of seeded vegetables struggle to germinate and come out of the ground, as are the weeds to some extent. But any weed that was germinated 14 days ago has thrived like the Incredible Hulk.

Insect problems are hoppers on lettuce, beans and potatoes; most of the spuds are big enough at this time to hold their own, but have been forced to spray on smaller beans. High rates of Pyganic not effective on 2nd and 3rd CPB larvae. Incredible pressure in blueberries from Japanese Beetles proved that the \$1500 spent last year on Milky Spore would have been better spent on a new guitar, and I was warned by Extension as to its relative ineffectiveness. Extensive defoliation and fruit damage have me scrambling for a solution; I may go in with Provado to try to knock them back before they drop and lay eggs. Looked into Tiphia wasps and found a source for propagation, but found out they were \$10 apiece shipped from North Carolina. Cedar Waxwing issue has reared its ugly head with extensive fines levied on a local gardener who left 6 dead ones in his patch to deter the others and was turned in by a neighbor. We found netting to be an effective solution, but it is very expensive in cost and labor and impractical for PYO without significant addition to prices.

(Salisbury NH) We need rain. Our hillside can handle lots of rain (like last year) but this lack of rain is killing us. Some success stories--broccoli and cauliflower did okay. We do not have irrigation and can see why it can make a huge difference. The battle of the bugs has increased--Japanese, cucumber, potato, and flea beetles. We had beautiful tatsoi and it was ruined by flea beetles. We're trying again with Chinese cabbage and bok choy under row cover this time. Germination has been poor on plantings of carrots, beets and lettuce without rain. We just keep replanting. Last year we had string beans, summer squash and zucchini with all the rain and this year we are still waiting. Our tomatoes, however, are a success. The hoophouse gave us just enough of a jump so that we have ripe tomatoes. Customers are slow to come. Not sure if it's the heat or the fact that we didn't get our permanent sign up until a few weeks ago. Eggplant and peppers look like poor yield; lack of moisture we assume. Finally signed up for credit card machine as we heard many people say sales increase approximately 30-35%. Most people don't have a lot of cash on them these days.

(Little Compton RI) The drought has been particularly bad and amplified by the heat. We have lost so many crops that we couldn't get water to and even ones that we did. Carrots came up then melted in the heat! I haven't seen anything like it in all the year I have been doing this. We were fooled by late June rains that seemed to keep us even in the soil moisture department. When the drought came in earnest, we realized that down deep the soil was dryer than we thought. Now I see the effectiveness of the "irrometer" units. With one of those in place I would have known of drought conditions earlier and got water to the plants that were falling behind before they got stressed. Our early potato plants went down, I am hoping it was heat and water related and wasn't blight. I haven't heard of any in this region yet. Our later ones in a different field look O.K.

(Wolcott) It's been a remarkable growing season so far, everything is so fast and so early to finish. It all looks good so far, but our work is compressed by everything coming on early. We usually don't harvest any annual Brassica seed until the first week of August, but the crop will likely be ready the end of third week in July, which puts it on top of the intensive season of pollinations and emasculations for hybrid seed production and breeding plot work. Usually the farm crew has a lull in the middle of the season where the hand pollination work fits in, but this year the lull was much earlier and briefer, and now they're getting slammed pretty good. No late blight on tomatoes so far, but we're doing preventive sprays with sulfur. We'll have to switch to copper if the blight comes in.

We did a different thing with tomatoes this year where we started fewer plants for seed but we've grown them more intensively. They all went in early under cover, and then the more determinate ones are being kept under low tunnels, using horizontal sheep fencing as a platform to hold them up off the ground. The hope is to get the yields up, as our tomato seed yields have never been great, although the quality is always good.

(Westminster West) Snacks, facts, fun, fellowship! Thanks to everyone that attended our twilight meeting last week, it was a success and great fun. In other news, the garlic harvest was finished today and it does look really good. This is the earliest harvest ever for garlic here and our largest ever. I will post a price list soon for seed garlic orders on the VT vegetable and berry growers association listserv. Our winter squash has been setting lots of fruit and is all vined out and looks great even without any substantial rain in the last 5 weeks. Raspberries in the high tunnel are coming on strong, big and sweet. At least I can drip irrigate that crop. Onions-some problems: thrips, Botrytis, lack of rain; but sizing up anyway so staying hopeful for that crop. Tomatoes in tunnel coming in nicely now, shipping to CT on wed. Summer squash, can't give away. Cover crops on our rotation fields growing in thickly, even without rain.

(Plainfield) I am so glad that heat wave broke. Now we can work afternoons again. Weeds took advantage of the situation. Mostly under control now, but it is never over with galinsoga and barnyard grass. Remind me of my pledge to plant more weed smothering cover crops. Rains have been timely, coming about the minute I decide it is time to irrigate. Not quite an inch a week, though. Dust mulch from cultivation seems to be helping retain soil moisture. Peas did well, all done now. Shell peas seem to be a thing of the past and no longer sell very well. Renovating strawberries, hope the thunderstorms help them bounce back. Will spin on some Cheep Cheep. Spraying transplanted brassicas for flea beetles; time to spray the corn as well.

(Grand Isle) The greenhouse tomatoes are yielding beautifully. We hope the plants will hold up for the long haul considering that there are signs of some mineral deficiencies indicated by yellowing leaves. We just finished a superb field of snap peas and the globe thistle in the perennial flower garden have never looked so good! On the down side, weeds are growing too well and the invasive wild parsnip is everywhere at roadsides and in neighbor's fallow fields that border our farm land. The runners of phragmites have tunneled under a paved road and attempted to enter our strawberry field. The nerve! As July gives way to August, the days are getting shorter too early.

LATE BLIGHT REPORTED IN MA, ME

Remain vigilant for late blight on potato and tomato. The disease has recently been confirmed at single locations in Waldoboro ME and Hadley MA. Still not confirmed in VT or NH.

If you suspect a crop is infected send a sample to: UVM Plant Diagnostic Clinic, 201 Jeffords Hall, 63 Carrigan Dr., Burlington, VT 05405.

DON'T DELAY STRAWBERRY RENOVATION

(from NY Berry News)

When renovation is delayed longer than 1-2 weeks after harvest carbohydrate reserves may be greatly reduced, making plantings susceptible to winter injury. Now is the time to renovate- don't put it off! Dr. David Handley of University of Maine advises: Early renovation allows more time for runner plant development, leading to larger crowns and more flower buds for next year. Early renovation also improves weed management by tilling in many weeds before they go to seed, and can help with insect and foliar disease control by interfering with life cycles at a critical stage of development.

RETAIL PRODUCE PRICE REPORTS

The latest retail price reports from growers in Vermont and vicinity are now posted at:

<http://www.uvm.edu/vtvegandberry/ProducePriceReports.html>. Report prices for the next summary at:
http://www.uvm.edu/newfarmer/?Page=marketing/price_survey.html&SM=marketing/sub-menu.html