



Vermont Vegetable and Berry News –July 3, 2018
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SPOTTED WING DROSOPHILA ALERT

SWD is being caught in southern New England. Here is an update on management options for berry growers: https://www.uvm.edu/vtvegandberry/SWD/SWD_Update_2018.pdf

REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

(Rochester) Traps for monitoring SWD are out where the fruit is starting to color up, in the raspberries. Expecting a catch any day, now that we are only a few days away from the Prelude raspberries being ripe. Mummy berry is showing up here and there but not yet in any great numbers. Fruit set is very good so if we can navigate through the pests we might have a good season. This very hot weather is the stress test that will show how widespread winter damage and fungal canker compromise is. This report sounds a bit gloomy—but fact is, the state of the planting and fullness of the crop is as good as we have had it for some years.

(South Strafford) Morrill Mountain Fruit Farm: blueberry, raspberry and currant bushes are laden with fruit in various degrees of ripening. Patriots and North Country blues are completely green. Little Giants have a colored cast to them. Red and white currants are furthest along and under attack by currant sawfly for the leaves and birds for the berries. Black currants are also starting to color, but don't seem to draw either the currant sawflies or the birds.

Yesterday was my first Japanese beetle sighting of the season. I am a little behind in spraying my standard mix of Regalia and stylet oil. Hopefully this will stop further leaf loss on currants and discourage Japanese beetles and all the fungi that come in the warm humid weather. I can use help picking what looks to be a great harvest. Send pickers my way if you know of anyone.

(Burlington) Worst strawberry season ever. Tiny fruit, low set. Plant health is good, pest pressure is reasonable, no evidence of frost damage to blooms, a true puzzle. I guess there is always next year.

We've been experimenting with silage tarps for pre-plant weed control, and have been impressed with the results. I had discounted tarps due to our larger scale, but I realized if we deployed them in our baby salad greens, it might be worth the effort since we don't have to cover much area each week. Definitely worth it, as we are picking with nearly zero weeds after 3 weeks under plastic.

Thankful to get a fat inch of rain prior to going into the oven for a week, but still glad to have invested in a lot of irrigation equipment. We are going to need it even more than usual in this next bit.

(Benson) This is my eleventh year and the first year we will not have fresh garlic, fresh carrots and bunched beets for the Saturday before the Fourth of July farmers' markets. It's hard to remember today, with 99 degrees, how late and cool the spring was.

I went out early this morning to flame 7500 row feet of carrots only to discover that there had been 30% germ overnight. Oh well, I was able to stale seed bed for two tine weedings before seeding. I am hoping for and anticipating a good summer season, but already looking forward to fall and winter season. It seems to be easier and more predictable.

(Charlotte) Looks like a great season for the blueberries and black raspberries. Did find some orange rust in the black raspberries, but it was confined to two plants that we removed, but will watch for it closely. Irrigation is getting put in. Hopefully it will be installed before the new strawberries arrive.

(Elmore) Hot, finally enough water. Huge fruit sets of northern kiwis, plums and others. Not too many flying insects yet. The new growth after the rains is making fruit tree branches lean heavily-a good time for propping them up and supporting them as the fruit load will get heavier. Lots of mowing, just in time for another round when finishing the first. The vegetables taste really good this year, as if the flavor is improving with the dry and then wet conditions. Ah, the northern Vermont "terroir."

(Starksboro) Our strawberry season is drawing to an end, which is great because tunnel cukes, zucchini and tomatoes are starting to come in. The heat is brutal, but we've been starting at 5 am, employees come at 6 am this week, and we try to get out of tunnels by 9 and do indoor work after 11. We have lots of iced tea in the fridge, clean towels ready to soak and put on people or vegetables, and hats and sunscreen in every vehicle.

Our well irrigation is holding on, and we're trying balance keeping things cool while not over watering with the humidity. We bought a set of mini wobblers to replace drip on quick greens and lettuce since drip and our old sprinklers haven't been cutting it in this heat. So far they are great. Took all starts out of the greenhouse and into a makeshift shade house for the week. Luckily there isn't much in there right now. Lots of weeding and mowing this week.

(Craftsbury) The blueberries are quietly ripening, enjoying the sun and heat and making the most of a harsh thunderstorm Saturday night to take on water for a long and blazingly hot week. Getting ready for the season which could be a few days earlier than our July 20 goal with this weather and hoping, like all growers, for no July surprises: hail, heavy winds, drought, early arrival of insect pests.

(Westminster West) We got 1.5" of precious rainfall last week, equal to what we have received in last 10 weeks, amazing. In spite things look good, running drips as often as I can. Two wells that depend on ground water levels are very low.

Started spraying for SWD last night using a small flashlight to attract them to the spray of Entrust. We tried this last year and it worked well. In addition, area between beds of raspberries are covered with ground cloth and swept regularly to get rid of rotting berries. Also did more thinning than usual to provide air movement thru the bushes.

Started pulling garlic for fresh market last week, nice size, but some Fusarium. The main harvest will probably start in a week, earliest ever. Just took row cover off squash fields, flowering has begun. Onions look very healthy, some thrips present; looking into using nematodes against them. Tunnel toms and cukes are coming in strong now. Have not seen any striped cucumber beetles so far! Sending workers home early in this heat, have two water coolers to keep everyone hydrated as well, stay safe everyone!

(Huntington) It goes to show just how much rain we typically get that a 3.1" June can seem so dry. Two weeks ago we did some overhead irrigating of greens for the first time in 5 years, though a CA grower would look at our moisture levels 3" down and laugh at how much water is still in the ground. No matter, it's such a contrast to last year's June deluge.

Insect pressure has been eerily absent on certain crops this year, with winter squash virtually untouched by cucumber beetles. We rotate squash multiple miles between seasons, but I've never seen this level of non-pressure before. Cabbage moths are being seen at low levels as well, and no thrips on onions. CPB are way below threshold on flowering potatoes in remote fields 5 miles away, though heavy on eggplant at the home farm. Leafminer on spinach has not been so absent, though, and traps are catching a few leek moths in the onions (we've never seen them this early in our isolated valley).

I ran the field cultivator shallowly over some of next year's vegetable ground at the end of last week to conserve moisture following that beautiful rain and ahead of this heat wave, and drilled soybean/oat/pea/vetch covers into nicely fit ground on Sunday with excellent moisture 2" down. With 95 degree temps I half expect to see cotyledons on Wednesday.

(E. Montpelier) Very delayed emergence on potato. Mid-May plantings in non-irrigated fields just sat for multiple weeks and finally emerged in late June. First CPB hatch is observed. The positive note is that first spray applications for CPB will go fast, with very little plant growth to cover. Field moisture is back up with recent rains.

(Dummerston) We're in a drought but have plenty of drip irrigation from a deep well. At this point, though, even crops we haven't gotten around to irrigating, such as the potatoes, look good. Storage carrots have germinated without irrigation. Strawberries, which did get irrigated a little, did well until they got mushed in the rain last week.

I'm sending helpers home at noon on heat advisory days with optional work available from 4 to 7pm. We're taking a swim and/or a siesta. The weeds will be there when we get back.

(Orwell) We have tunnel tomatoes 2 weeks earlier than usual but are disappointed to find that our usual markets aren't really ready for us, and certainly not ready to pay a higher price to cover the cost of heat. Also disappointed to see local berries and tomatoes in some of our favorite retail establishments competing with much less expensive crops from Quebec and even California. Our faithful customers have to be dedicated to consistently choose the more expensive local crops and support our farms.

In the field, with lack of rain we've watched the clay soil that isn't irrigated bake into a deeply cracked piece of pottery. A spring-planted oat pea cover crop flowered when the oats were just over a foot tall! Grateful for a burst of rain last week but we are still in a deficit, so keeping up irrigation this hot week is important. The heat is stressful on all the plants and our animals, not to mention humans. Looking forward to lots of swims this week.

(Plainfield NH) We were critically dry, then picked up an inch and a half of rain last Thursday after which early blight appeared in the wet spots of the potato fields literally overnight and at an alarming rate. We are into a regular curative and protectant spray program from here on out. Other solanaceous crops seem disease free with the exception of PM in greenhouse tomatoes gaining a foothold. It has been a manageable problem since April, but having an additional fungus problem meriting sprays is annoying and expensive.

Cukes and field squash are coming in nicely, rounding out the sales at the farmstand. A mediocre (but better than anticipated) strawberry season will likely be dealt a death blow from this heat. Despite best efforts at fruit and leaf protection, PM came in on some varieties. UPick was strong as were retail and wholesale sales, likely a result of winter injury on some farms tightening up sales after king fruit was removed. Blueberries coloring, netting application is on the must-do list this week. We will be deep in the black raspberries by the weekend.

One of the tough issues for us this year is the complete lack of local help. The reason I am sure is low unemployment, and nature of the job. Our future looks heavily dependent on the H2A program unless there is a shift in the economy.

(New London NH) Strawberries still going strong. Just starting to move into the late season varieties. Last week's heavy rain damaged some berries and now with the heat we are keeping a close eye on fruit rot. A late season fungicide was applied after the rain to avoid a flush of anthracnose in the hot weather. Some thrips damage in the Valley Sunsets, which we usually do not see in June-bearers. Hoping PYO traffic stays strong despite the heat so we can keep up with the fast ripening. In a year like this, we are thankful to have converted all of our strawberries to drip irrigation. Being able to water daily has helped maintain fruit size and manage plant stress during hot afternoons. Water supply is holding up so far, but another month without rain could change that.

Peas are being harvested in earnest. Last week's rain helped size up the main season varieties nicely. First zucchini and summer squash just starting to be harvested along with green beans. First potatoes will be coming out of the field by the end of the week. Greenhouse tomatoes and cherry tomatoes are coming in quickly now.

We will be busy this week knocking down pest populations. CPB has really showed up in potato and eggplant, leafhopper is back in beans, potatoes, and strawberries, leafminer continues to be problem in beets, spinach, and chard, and thrips are due for one more spray in onions. Keeping a close eye on cucumber beetles. No cucurbit powdery mildew yet but we know it is on its way. As with everyone at this point, we are trying to keep up with irrigation. Lots of moving pipes and turning valves this season. Glad we can drip irrigate multiple acres at once.

For fertility management, weekly applications of calcium nitrate through drip irrigation and foliar applications of nitrogen to non-drip irrigated fields have helped maintain nitrogen levels in crops during these very dry months.

(Argyle NY) We had a good strawberry season with Chandler planted in the annual bed system. Yields were above average for us, though lots of tarnished plant bugs, which we haven't seen in decades, reduced the last week of yields. Other crops have done well and we had record sales at farmers' markets in June.

With the heat, workers go from 6 am to noon/1pm with root beer floats and indoor work during the mid-day heat! We were happy to get an inch of rain last week, though we have unlimited water by using a transfer pump to re-fill our irrigation pond from a stream.

We are sending in leaf samples for testing on the apples and blueberries, which we don't do often enough. Blueberries are just starting to turn and we did not get the SWD netting up as planned. However, an article in the April American Fruit Grower suggests that a sugar substitute, Truvia, is toxic to SWD. We plan on putting it out in spray solution, we'll let you know.

The over-wintered onion crop continues to be fantastic this year, with the Electric (reds) very large and selling for \$2 each at markets, so well worth growing/tending for 9-10 months! Fresh beets are in full production, but we are still using up the last of the root cellared carrots and potatoes.

(Little Compton RI) I remember reading that broccoli heads get damaged when the daytime temperature at pre~heading goes over 95 degrees for six hours. The current heat wave shows why we don't try to grow mid~summer broccoli anymore, instead we fill consumer needs with Chinese broccoli Happy Rich in the dog days of summer.

We have black plastic ready for cucumber transplants, wondering how to approach this. Going to turn drip irrigation on first and try a whitewash of cheap latex paint. Otherwise I think the heat will kill the cucumbers, the hot black plastic is as hard on the plants as lack of water.

Busy trying to get water to winter squash I wasn't planning on irrigating till fruiting stage. PM in greenhouse tomatoes still around but hard to find time to spray Stylet oil when now busy with harvest. Farmers' markets finally waking up and doing well.

NOTE ABOUT SPRAYING HOME-MADE PEST CONTROLS

I received several notes of concern about a message in the last issue describing a deer repellent spray containing raw eggs. This could pose a food safety risk. The same goes for spraying of milk (as some growers described for powdery mildew) or compost teas juiced with sugars of some sort. It is best to stick with commercial products labeled for a crop, for both efficacy and safety reasons. If you do use a homemade spray, avoid application to crops that will be consumed raw without cooking.

GARLIC GROWERS ON FARM WORKSHOP JULY 12

Join Howard Prussack of High Meadows Farm in Westminster West, VT and UVM Agricultural Engineer Chris Callahan and Cornell Vegetable Specialist Crystal Stewart for a field walk discussing garlic and onion production and postharvest handling. The focus will be on Fusarium control, Allium Leafminer identification and control, and post-harvest handling. For more information, or to request a disability-related accommodation to participate in this program, please contact Chris Callahan at chris.callahan@uvm.edu or 802-447-7582 x256 by July 5 so we may assist you.

REDUCED TILLAGE FOR ORGANIC CROPS FIELD DAY JULY 31

Six different In-field demonstrations will be discussed by agricultural specialists and growers from NY and Vermont at the Reduced Tillage in Organic Systems Field Day on July 31 from 9 am to 3 pm at the Cornell Willsboro Research Farm, just a few miles from the Charlotte/Essex ferry. This field day is geared toward vegetable, row crop, and small grain crop with organic practices will be featured but the methods will benefit both conventional and organic growers. Topics will include roller-crimping, zone tillage in high residue, in-row cultivation tools, stale seedbed and weed seed bank management strategies and grower experiences with reducing tillage on their farms. The overall focus of the day will be improving soil health. See <https://enych.cce.cornell.edu/event.php?id=953>