



Vermont Vegetable and Berry News – July 3, 2023
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<https://www.uvm.edu/extension/horticulture/commercial>

REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

(Cambridge) The frost was pretty bad here the night of May 17, at 28F for about four hours. The blueberries were mid-bloom at the time and I had no idea if any were going to survive. Presently the bushes are covered in berries which are getting nice and big with all this rain. The 2 acre field is on a hillside so perhaps that helped. We just have a few fruit trees but the pear trees are covered in fruit for the first time in 3 years. The apple trees are generally pretty good too, with the exception of the Cortland.

(Hinesburg) For the freeze in May, we had 26 degrees F. Hardy outdoor crops were all under row cover and unaffected. It was sunny the afternoon before, and we closed up the hoop houses a few hours earlier than we normally would, and added two layers of Ag 19 row cover. We had pole beans in one hoop house that had started climbing the trellis, so it was impractical to use row cover on them. The temp in the bean house (no row cover) was 28 F. The beans were heavily damaged. Tomatoes, cukes, and peppers in hoop houses under two layers of row cover stayed up around 44 degrees and were not affected. Beans have since bounced back and look like nothing ever happened.

Not many applicants for farm crew positions, but we are fully staffed with great people. Sales have been good. Farmstand sales were slow in April compared to last year but have improved. We've been able to maintain our CSA numbers from 2020, 2021, and 2022. We have to do more marketing than we did a couple years ago, but surprisingly we've been able to maintain the COVID spike in sales pretty well. I'm always grateful for the CSA and Farmstand this time of year when there are lots of options on the market and we notice a sudden decrease in sales to restaurants and coops.

We worked on a new wash/pack room all winter. The project dragged on into the busy spring and created a bit of chaos because we didn't have a cooler when the CSA and farmstand opened. It's been a huge improvement in efficiency, food safety, and reduced stress on packing days. Not sure how we ever did it in our former space.

No leek moth on garlic this year. More aphids than ever. Lots of cucumber beetles and squash bugs.

(Dummerston) Vegetable crops survived the deep freeze in May with minimal damage under row covers, though the neighboring orchard did not fare well. Crops are a bit behind due to the cold spring and lots of cool cloudy days in June. Cucumbers and squash are just starting to trickle in.

One good thing so far this year is that there are very few insect pests. Flea beetles are nowhere to be seen. I've seen only the occasional cabbage looper, and some striped cucumber beetle but not too many. Even mosquitoes and black fly populations seem low. In May, hordes of small flies which Vern says were probably seed corn maggot emerged under row covers. But even these seem to have done little damage. So we're having a slow but healthy start to the harvest season.

(Westminster) An otherwise outstanding strawberry season abruptly slowed down after we got more than four inches of rain on June 26. We'll pick a little through the Fourth, and that's the longest a strawberry season has lasted. Demand was high for strawberries because there were so few available after the hard freeze in mid-May. Fortunately, we irrigated our fields overnight and the berries survived and even thrived.

So now it's raining daily and we're a little afraid the pattern will continue for weeks, as it did two years ago. But who knows? Keep your fingers crossed. The lack of local labor hasn't hurt us yet. The cool weather slowed down growth and harvest; the weeds have been slowed down as well.

We've been very pleased with our Treffler cultivator from Holland. The well-designed Lely-type machine has a lot of adjustments, so it works well on small-seeded crops like beets, carrots, and parsnips but also on transplanted crops like kale, squash, and cabbage. At least until now. The Treffler definitely shines in dry weather but not so well in rainy weather and in wet soils.

Market demand has been steady. We're lucky to have an outlet in Florida; the abundance of organic growers in New England makes for lively competition.

(Greenfield Center NY) Strawberries survived freeze, but drought in first half of season was hard on them. Endless rain in second half of season led to lots of fungal disease. Blueberries appeared to be recovered after freeze, the ones that were not in full flower and did not suffer immediate petal drop seemed to be doing ok. But as they mature and get first hint of blue they either rot on the stem or drop off. The fungus appears to be internal, splitting a seemingly good looking, still green blueberry often yields a mass of rot on the inside. On some it appears to take the appearance of mummy berry, but without the later stages of mummification. They reach a certain point and then drop. Temperature here was recorded at 27 F but thought to be colder due to plant damage. Here is a [short article](#) from U of Ga regarding aftereffects of a freeze in GA in 2022. It is informative.

(Little Compton, RI) Unusual weather all over New England this spring. We had two near freezes, and the generally cool temps claimed more crops than usual. Anything we made the effort to cover with row cover paid us back in spades.

Green sprouted all three plantings of potatoes this year to have them pop out of the ground and offer us better weed control. Worked great until 3" of rain and then they came roaring out so fast we had to hill them extra high and breakdown hills for weed control.

CPB population is dramatically down so far. Aphids on the other hand have surprised us on all outdoor solanaceous plantings.

Using two new OMRI approved spreader stickers, Kinetic and Xena. We had to find an alternative to Nu Film! The heavy pine tar component was ruining spray tank walls and delivery hoses, etc. These materials are much better, but cannot be left in the sprayer over night because the natural polymer component comes out of solution and then it looks like wet toilet paper floating around in your spray tank next morning

Not looking forward to having Allium Leaf Miner in our leeks this fall. The organic recommendation of Entrust and Mpede doesn't give me much intuitive confidence. Thinking we may just grow half the crop on my son's conventional land so we are sure we will have a crop at the important winter markets. Being next to the ocean, covering 1.5 acres with insect net just isn't an option.

Farmer markets are great and crowds are strong. Gave up on our debit card CSA system and returned to credit cards. We were luring members in with 10% discount. Now we only lose 2.6% with our credit card Square reader. Financially we haven't skipped a beat and there are lot less headaches over CSA funding efforts. The worst thing about the debit card was that 40% of CSA members either lost their cards or week after week forgot to bring them to one of our markets, which took up too much time helping them checkout!

Greenhouse tomatoes growing well but uneven ripening happening we can't figure out.

(Argyle NY) The May freeze didn't affect us because the low here was 30 degrees and we were running far enough behind to not have really tender plants outside. In our 3 tunnels I turned on the heaters about 4 am and skated through.

Our decision to slow down to 2 acres was a good one in terms of lack of a labor pool. Last year we had 3 full time and 3 part time people and moved to just 3 part time this year. Not exactly what we wanted but it's working out and the decision to change marketing from farmers markets to online sales has also made it easier to purchase large amounts of bulk items and focus on the weekly products.

Further streamlining is ahead but it all takes time to think it through and watching that the decisions we've made are good ones. It's never just one thing but many small decisions that make it a good year.

The cool weather of June made strawberry and greens growing a breeze

VERMONT WEEKLY PEST SCOUTING REPORTS

If you missed these on the VVBGA listserv, the Vermont Entomology and Participatory Action Research Team compiles weekly reports on major insect pests and diseases found throughout the state, and the region. All reports are posted at <https://blog.uvm.edu/vepart-scouting/>

POLLINATOR SUPPORT REPORT

Laura Johnson, UVM Extension Pollinator Support Specialist

Legume cover crops seeded in late 2022 have been providing spring blooms to wild and managed pollinators. A brief nectar and pollen dearth typically occurs in late May/early June, when early fruit crops are at end of bloom. Legume flowers, like overwintered crimson clover and hairy vetch, can be help provide on-farm floral resources.

Typically, a second floral dearth occurs in late July-early August, and that's when warm season flowering cover crops can provide pollen and nectar to foraging pollinators.

Plantings of legume cover crops seeded in early 2023 have started blooming in late June, attracting important crop pollinating bees, like worker bumble bees, sweat bees, and honey bees.

You can now create your own Farm Pollinator Support Plan using the easy-to -ill template on the [VVBGA website](#). We are piloting this online tool and hope you will try it and provide feedback. Member farms can [log in to the dashboard](#) to create and manage their pollinator support plan which includes the following sections: farm information; cover crop selection and management; dedicated pollinator habitat; mowing practices; pest management; pollinator monitoring; tillage practices; water sources; and use of managed pollinators. You can also upload images and create a pdf of the plan. Consider using your pollinator support plan with customers as a marketing tool.

It should only take about 15 minutes to create you plan, which summarizes pollinator support practices on your farm and will inform you of new practices to consider for enhancing pollinator health. For assistance with your plan and to provide feedback contact Laura Johnson at laura.o.johnson@uvm.edu or 802-656-4827.

UVM EXTENSION AGRICULTURAL ENGINEERING UPDATES

Andy Chamberlin and Chris Callahan

New Blog Post: Farmer's Favorite: Univerco Barrel Washer. The market garden at Shelburne Farms grows three acres of certified organic fruit, vegetables and flowers while supporting an educational mission. They wanted to eliminate a bottleneck in their postharvest systems of hand washing roots with hoses and power washers, turning them around by hand or in crates. This led them to invest in a barrel washer for their farm. This blog post shares an overview of this barrel washer that is sized well for the small farm. <https://go.uvm.edu/ffuniverco>

New Podcast Episode: Harrison Bardwell – Bardwell Farm: EP8. This episode comes to you from Hatfield Massachusetts where we visit Harrison Bardwell of Bardwell Farm. The episode starts with a tour of his greenhouses, then checks out a few of his experiments with early peppers and overwintered onions. He shares some of his background that equipped him to build up and manage a 30-acre vegetable business all while only being in his mid-20's. <https://thefarmersshare.com/2023/06/19/harrison-bardwell-bardwell-farm-ep8/>

As the summer heat approaches we wanted to remind you of a few resources: Managing Humidity and Condensation in Coolers at <http://go.uvm.edu/humidity> and Ventilation in Greenhouses and High Tunnels at <http://go.uvm.edu/tunnelventilation>

UPCOMING ON-FARM EVENTS

July 18, 4-6 pm. [VVBGA workshop](#). Burnt Rock Farm, Huntington VT. This certified organic farm specializes in winter storage crops and summer greenhouse crops. The workshop will focus on specialized equipment for vegetable production, especially for accurate fertilizer application, and water management.

July 21, 9 am-4 pm. [Northeast Mechanical Weed Control Field Day](#). Hall Brook Farm, Thorndike, ME. Tool demonstrations for small to large vegetable and field crop production: hand tools, walk-behind tractors, tool carriers, and tractor-mounted equipment. Presentations and panel discussions from farmers and researchers.

July 26, 3-5 pm. [VVBGA workshop](#). UVM Horticultural Research Farm, S. Burlington, VT. Problem pests on vegetable and berry farms. Join entomologists Vic Izzo and Scott Lewins to discuss strategies to deal with Swede midge, Colorado potato beetle, leek moth, wire worm, and more.

July 27, 4-6 pm. NOFA-VT workshop on [Soil Health for Vegetable Growers](#), Flywheel Farm, Woodbury, VT. This diversified fruit and vegetable farm will share management techniques, tools, and how to stay adaptive while balancing soil health and productivity goals.

July 30, 10-noon. NOFA-VT workshop on [No-Till Vegetable Production](#). Breadseed Farm, Craftsbury, VT. Learn about setting up no-till beds, incorporating perennial hedgerows, growing in high tunnels, finding markets, and growing intensively on a small scale! Gardeners, homesteaders, and small commercial growers will find value in this workshop.

August 5, 4-6 pm. Workshop on [Pollinator Habitat](#). Luna Bleu Farm, South Royalton, VT. Join NOFA-VT, University of Vermont Extension, and Vermont Vegetable and Berry Growers Association for this hands-on workshop to increase your understanding of wild pollinators and practices that support them in diversified agricultural landscapes using flowering cover crops, habitat blocks, mowing, pest control, and pollinator monitoring.

August 9, 3-5 pm. [VVBGA workshop](#). Small Axe Farm, Barnet, VT. Topics: Reducing erosion on a steep slope, managing pests with wild habitat, intensive no-till production. This small, organic market garden grows a diversity of crops using no-till practices to promote soil health and prevent erosion, nurturing the natural habitat around the farm to reduce pest pressure on crops.

August 20, 10-noon. NOFA-VT workshop on [Intro to Seed Saving](#), Kindle Farm School, Townshend, VT. Learn how to collect, clean, and store seeds. Get hands-on practice harvesting, threshing, and winnowing seeds. Applicable for gardeners, homesteaders, and small-scale farmers just getting started with seed saving.

September 20, 4-6 pm. [VVBGA workshop](#). Evening Song Farm, Shrewsbury, VT. Topics: No till organic growing, reducing erosion on a slope, fall tunnel plantings. This diversified organic farm uses mulches, fabrics, cover crops, and no-till to reduce soil loss and improve soil health. The farm also produces crops year-round in the tunnels, and this workshop will feature the transition of summer to fall crops.