



Vermont Vegetable and Berry News – July 6, 2010
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REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

(Moretown) New potatoes are coming in strong and look and taste great. Snap peas before the 4th of July certainly made up for the failed crop last year. Cuke beetles are finally starting to fade, just in time for the cabbage moth to move in.

(S. Royalton) Direct seeded sweet corn is rib high, cantaloupes are starting to size up and are starting to look like fruit not just green baseballs. We started pulling greens onions, incredible growth on them the past few days. Beans, however, in a holding pattern, they are progressing every slowly.

(Montpelier) It's been bordering on just a bit too much rain. Cool weather for a few days last week slowed summer squash down a bit. Tomatoes continue to look great in the greenhouses and out in the field. A bit of early blight in the potatoes. Rose chafers are enjoying my greenhouse basil. Cucumbers are coming in real strong in the greenhouses. I'm happy with Green Finger variety and it's trellising; doing much better than the expensive euro cuke plants and not needing to be fed constantly. I also get the impression market customers prefer a plain cuke. Control of angular leaf spot and anthracnose appears to have been achieved with the controls I mentioned last time. Started harvesting okra yesterday.

Peppers and eggplant all showing nice fruit set. Outside plantings of melon and winter squash looking happy. Markets continue to be well attended but sales remain sluggish. Deer have finally decided to come in and help with the pruning of my asparagus. Early cabbage is about a week away from harvest, a few green caterpillars in them but population is low. Broccoli is buttoned up and cauliflower looks good. Small sweet corn planting is chest high and looking great. Japanese beetles are starting to emerge but populations are a great deal lower after using milky spore the last two wet years. Considering a large application of nematodes for rose chafer control into next year. Time to get fall starts going and repairs finished.

(Moultonborough NH) Powdery mildew has run rampant through 3 heated tomato houses. Just as devastating to the plants as late blight, they are almost dead and no more fruit set. I've never had it in the spring, before I started overwintering greens, etc. If you get it, do not be kind, attack it immediately. Low light and 50-60 degree temperatures are perfect (late May to mid-June here). Have always heated my houses to 65+ degrees, but dropped temps in May to slow them down. Huge mistake. My "no spray" practices are not working to check its' spread, even pruning doesn't help. (Editor's note: potassium bicarbonate fungicides applied at onset of symptoms can suppress spread) Otherwise crops look good, bumper crop of raspberries in tunnel and new Seascapes started to fruit.

(Warren) Started harvesting new potatoes, carrots and beets this week. Squash and cucumbers too. Last week's micro burst was enough to actually soak our sandy soils and things just exploded. I guess we should be irrigating more. Sales from our new farm store are growing daily.

A rainy afternoon goofing off led to the discovery that our onion topper does beets and turnips too. Woodchucks under control for the moment but the deer are getting bolder. Really happy with direct-sown head lettuce. We have very few weeds so it's much easier than transplanting and the heads seem to hold in the field a lot longer.

(Plainfield NH) Starting to coat up things for the arrival of worms and blight, in the field and tomato greenhouses. We found the big horned worm moth, so we went in with dipel and some bravo, as we were hit hardest first in the tomato greenhouses with late blight last year. Blues are all netted and we will start picking in earnest this week. With all the talk about bank failures I have found one that is rock solid: the weed bank on my farm. Had to abandon my clover living mulch in between plastic this year as the galinsoga and chick weed were so thick that I decided to go for the fallow strategy until further notice, though it breaks my heart burning up organic matter by fallow tilling. Trying to keep the thrips down on the onions and keep the tops healthy and the hoppers were worrying a planting of beans, but potatoes are far enough along so there doesn't seem to be enough injury to warrant any action. Picking field cukes and squash now and starting to wholesale tomatoes. Much of the corn I planted May 15 rotted in the cool weather we had at the time the corn could have used a little heat to get it out of the ground. Replanted and stand is much better but won't earn any bragging rights. Note for this winter: rebuild the max emerge units on the old planter.

(Rochester) The effect of the May frosts on our raspberries is showing, now that the real summer heat has arrived. Some die-back of the fruiting canes is evident in all varieties with the greatest damage at the lowest elevations. Blueberries may make up for some of it as three of our four varieties have set a large crop. We will also get some summer blackberries for the first time, the canes having wintered over fairly well. Our workampers have arrived and the extra energy is appreciated.

(Enfield NH) Weeds are doing very well but we are making good headway with the dry hot weather. Have plenty of lettuce, chard, kale, summer squash, lettuce, spinach. Onions are doing well; corn is just tasseling, melons flowering. Should have tomatoes in a week, would have had sooner but distracted putting up the new hoop house earlier this spring. Garlic looks great, Potatoes doing well even though planted late, except for leafhopper burn. Sprayed once so far with copper for late blight but loving the hot dry weather. Should have eggplant in a week, peppers in two. Broccoli doing well.

(Burlington) Happy to have a hot, dry spell and be able to manage weeds well for the first time in what seems to be several years. Our ongoing Swede midge 'field research' continues, with our May 3rd transplanting of broccoli a 30% loss. We picked nearly 100% of our April 26 transplanting, though, so this is not as bad as last year. We kept them under row cover for longer (3+ weeks) this year, and tried to get them off to a quicker start, which seemed to help reduce our losses. While the SM larvae can affect the heads, they are more damaging when they get to the plants prior to head formation, as they can terminate the growing point and eliminate any possibility of a head. Other than the Swede midge, spring has been good, with nice greens, good strawberries, and happy CSA members.

(Sudbury) Peas are finally coming into their own although this week's heat may end them. Lettuce continues to grow very well and sells well at the local market. Early beets harvested for first time and were appreciated by our customers. Raspberries fly off the market table - wish we had more plants. Potatoes, squash, cucumbers and beans all blooming and growing nicely as is kale and Swiss chard.

Hopefully, a little heat and dry weather will result in improved production but will also require vigilance for the incoming little varmints.

(Westminster West) We do need rain but things are fine really. Winter squash is running and setting fruit like crazy! Picking tons of summer squash and green beans. Started pulling garlic, seems about 10 days early this year but the size of the heads seems impressive. Onions likewise doing well. Seeding down cover crops for the summer months and getting soil samples ready to send off to prepare for next year's garlic and onion crops. After a huge wave of cucumber beetles, it seems to have abated now. Setting up drip lines for the mums and asters we are potting up soon, always a crew favorite task. It was 105 degrees in the greenhouse today, had to let the crew go home early. Gearing up for our twilight farm tour on the 15 of this month, will have local cheeses and drinks to snack on as well as the technician from Delta T to help answer questions concerning our new heating system. Well, I'm off to jump into the farm pond to cool off before I head out on the tractor.

(Argyle NY) Weather has been great for everything up to today, and now we'll be challenged somewhat with the heat, but irrigation will get us through as usual. The markets are very strong and we hope more young farmers start up to meet the demand as we are determined to slow down over the next few years! Blueberries are starting after a good 4 week strawberry season, and we have a good supply of apples in the orchard though many orchards in the area were frost damaged in May. One high tunnel is producing lots of summer squash, basil, cukes, and tomatoes will start this week. The second tunnel is all planted to sweet potatoes for our second season of the trial. We are seeing a few cucumber beetles, tarnish plant bugs, squash bugs, and we did a preventative spray on the onions for thrips though haven't seen any, nor any leafhoppers yet. Always checking.

Garlic scapes acted odd this year with many not coming out all the way, and most smaller; we're researching that now to see what is causing it. Some powdery mildew and angular leaf spot in the tunnel, but all in all, crops look good. Digging carrots and we've had lots of beets along with the other 20 crops to keep customers happy. Great farm crew and we're trying to get away for a day or two now and then to enjoy life off the farm!

(Little Compton RI) Our Peaches are in and two weeks early! I suspected this might be a trend and took more than a (tractor seat drive by), look at my garlic. Oooops! Two varieties had already lost their outer skins and the rest should have been harvested a week ago! I urge everyone to watch their biennial and perennial crops closely this year. Everything is coming in way fast and with something like garlic it can spell trouble. Speaking of trouble: we learned a hard lesson with our grafted tomatoes. We pruned them back to 18-20 true leaves and they looked great and had much better airflow. But, my young crew had a hard time snapping off the leaf knuckles up against the stem and opted (without my permission) to cut them off instead. Leaving thousands of 2" stubs. It was a small disaster, because the stubs bred Botrytis (gray mold) and other funk. A week later we walk into the house to see 18 plants with completely yellow leaves, top to bottom! Rich McAvoy at UConn helped me figure it out. By not fully taking off the leaves at the knuckle; I opened up a major highway of disease to enter the vascular system of the plant. Bottom line: it's OK to prune off leaves quickly with pruners but be sure you are back in there in a day or so to cleanup the cuts back to the stem. He suggested using a paste of Chilean nitrate to kill the now-brown Botrytis trying to get into our plants. It actually worked quite well, the heavy salt in the fertilizer knocked the disease/infection right out!

RETAIL PRODUCE PRICE REPORTS

The latest direct market grower-reported prices from Vermont and vicinity are now posted at: <http://www.uvm.edu/vtvegandberry/ProducePriceReports.html>. More reporters are needed. Over the next 2 weeks feel free to report your prices of any or all crops for the July 20 summary. Go to: http://www.uvm.edu/newfarmer/?Page=marketing/price_survey.html&SM=marketing/sub-menu.html

UPCOMING GROWER MEETINGS

Details are posted at: <http://www.uvm.edu/vtvegandberry/meetings/meetlist.html>

July 15 – **High Tunnel Innovations at High Meadows Farm**, Westminster West. 5 pm

Howard and Lisa and Lisa Prussack operate High Meadows Farm in Westminster West, Vermont, one of the first farms to become certified organic in the state. They have 65 acres of fields, mostly hay, with 6 acres in storage crops like winter squashes, garlic and onions and cover crops for rotation. Their primary business is wholesale organic greenhouse-grown herbs and ornamentals, although they also grow high tunnel raspberries and tomatoes. The farm tour will show these crops as well as their new Harnois 40 x100 ft natural ventilated house with a heating system focused on the root zone on a rolling bench system and an Igrow computer that integrates the heating and cooling systems automatically and shows cost of operating the system on a hourly basis; an aqua mat system for watering the benches and a new spring development project with NRCS that provides a 4500 gal water storage system for the greenhouses and fields, all gravity fed. The meeting is sponsored by the VT Vegetable and Berry Growers Assn and UVM Extension; it is free and open to all commercial growers. Directions: From exit 4 off I-91 head north to center of Putney and go left on the Westminster West Rd. for 4 1/2 miles. The farm is on the right.

July 21 – **Organic Small Fruit Production at Adam's Berry Farm**, Burlington. 5 pm

Free for VOF farmers and VV&BGA members, \$10 for NOFA-VT members, \$15 non-members. This workshop will focus on organic production of strawberries, blueberries, and raspberries. Adam Hausman has been growing these fruits commercially for eight years on several acres in Burlington's Intervale. He will describe his high tunnel production, field management, variety selection, pest and disease control, pruning and marketing strategies. Also attending this workshop will be extension small fruit specialists, entomologists, pathologists, technical advisers, and nematologists from across the Northeast as part of their summer meeting. Come pick their brains! Directions: From Riverside Ave in Burlington, turn down Intervale Rd. and drive 1 mile to the farm on your left. Look for the berry signs (past Gardener's Supply and Intervale Compost.) Park on left as you enter the farm.