



VERMONT VEGETABLE AND BERRY GROWER NEWS – August 1, 2022

Compiled by Vern Grubinger, University of Vermont Extension

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

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REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

(E. Wallingford) We had some hail damage last week. The hail was larger than 3/4 inch. Some of the hail remained on top of our bird netting but no damage was done to netting. It did bruise ripe blueberries and marked the green fruit. Squash and cukes are marked as well. No signs of SWD. Fruit is large despite dry weather and we're having a great turn out for PYO. Some of our blueberries are the size of a quarter!

(Newbury) Very little potato beetle infestation this year. However earwigs by the score are taking up residence in my cauliflower.

(Guildhall) Our fields are fields are river bottom sand, so we could always use more rain, but thankfully we've been catching thunderstorms and aren't anywhere near as dry as most of New England. Potatoes look great thus far. One 17-acre field is weedier than I like, having missed some early tine weedings, and it's historically our weediest field. The other 31 acres though are clean. All the fields have filled their rows.

CPB was late this year. We didn't spray until 7/13 (for second generation of CPB) and then again 7/25. Usually our first spray, which is for 2nd gen, is on 7/1. Hopefully won't need to spray again. We spray the 2 generation, not the first, because I want all the fields to have what they'll get for CPB, and no sense wasting spray on low populations. The second spray about 10 days after the first spray is to take care of anything that emerges later because it was still pupating underground during the first spray.

We could start picking new baby reds but we're holding off as long as we can afford too. Pumpkins are weedy garbage this year, but there will be pumpkins, and who's got time to handweed?

(Marlboro) Just now seeing SWD, later than past years which is a welcome break. We've been seeing some damage in the berries and had a positive ID thanks to the quick work of Margaret Skinner at UVM. Getting the first spray of Entrust on in hopes of slowing them down.

We've covered three rows of late-ripening blueberries with drosophila proof netting, so hoping to be able to pick them later when the SWD gets too bad in the uncovered rows. The best raspberry year we have had for many years because it's been so dry, they have done well. Good blueberry crop also, and we are getting plenty of pickers for PYO.

(Huntington) In April-July, we've had 4.6", 3.6", 5.5", and 5.6" of rain, with only one driveway-rearranging thunderstorm. My only complaint about weather for this year is that it was too comfortable sleeping weather during the cool June and early July, which led to some somewhat slow growth on heat-loving crops like sweet potatoes. That, and all the cool dewy nights and October-like days created perfect conditions for onion downy mildew. It's been 8 years since we have seen any of that nasty visitor, and the initial infection site in the field was exactly where my sprayer boom bumped way up in the air when doing a late June preventive spray of Serenade and Regalia, giving poor coverage in that stretch. On that note, I would love to see more efficacy trials being done in the northeast for OMRI-approved fungicides, insecticides, and biostimulants. I don't have the bandwidth to try all the new products and permutations out there, and while some of them are snake oil, many have promise.

Markets have been strong, and our ~10% price increases across the board have generally been met with little push-back, allaying some of my fears of demand-destruction if we try to increase prices somewhat commensurate with input prices. Not that a 10% price increase is sufficient to get us on par with pre-pandemic pricing and input levels, but at least it's movement in the right direction. With high prices for anything made of steel, rubber, wood or plastic, I feel for anyone who had been planning to be in a heavy capitalization phase of their business.

A farmer friend recently rolled his tractor and suffered a broken leg when he was pinned under the tractor. It could've been far worse. If you have a tractor old enough to not have a rollbar, please be careful out there, and consider retrofitting one. If you have a rollbar (ROPS) on your tractor, please keep it fully raised and wear your seatbelt (ROPS only works if the driver is wearing one). We need to preserve the farmers we've got.

(Westminster) Remember when we were complaining about how dry it was? That's over now; lots of rain. Our first sweet corn had problems with corn borer, but it looks like our next few plantings will be cleaner. We're harvesting Providence, a big favorite with our customers. After a slow start, sales of greens – lettuce, kale, collards and cabbage – are picking up. We harrowed under quite a bit of lettuce this year, some of which grew too fast in the heat and some because of oversupply in the market.

We've seen several waves of flea beetle come through on our kale and have treated it with PyGanic; also cabbage worm on cabbage.

We've begun harvesting beets and carrots, and that all looks good. Not much else; just slogging through the hot days.

(Salisbury NH) Rain has been spotty at best and even though last storm brought 1" it is not enough. Almost everything this year seems behind. We had some really warm/hot days, but many nights still were below 60 until a couple weeks ago.

Tried Citadel cukes this year. Covered with ProtekNet but took it off to weed and start harvest. This variety evidently is a favorite of the cucumber beetles. Almost every single one had damage on the tender skin making them seconds. Marketmore cukes had almost no damage. Have a small patch of Little Leaf pickling cukes that I'm trialing too.

Raspberries seem to really be suffering. Smaller berries and go from ripe to shriveled quickly. Maybe the fall raspberries will fare better. Peas have been done for about a week. I really like Super Sugar Snap peas. Very sweet and people can eat them raw - pod and all or shell them if they want. Best of both worlds. New rows started (Knight peas) that hopefully can survive the heat of August to produce this fall.

Finding lots of tomato horn worms now. Slugs have still been a major problem - especially in the lettuce and cabbage. Hard to convince customers they need a little protein with their salads.

Farm Stand has finally been very busy now that I have tomatoes. Corn brings them in too but that isn't a money maker unless they buy other things. Haven't heard any complaints about pricing - maybe because the grocery stores have raised their prices. People are further and further removed from what is in season. They were asking for corn in June, and this fall I'll have people asking for asparagus.

(Plainfield NH) A serious drought was broken a bit this week by long overdue showers. We were looking at losing a potato crop, and it's still going to be pretty poor. A good blueberry crop has been a pleasant surprise, with good production, size, and demand. Beginning to see some SWD so we will start spraying the later plots. Leafhoppers are here, scarab beetles seem on the decline.

Strawberry renovation is underway, and the inch of rain we got greened up the foliage. Picking corn and melons, and a few cherries. Fall cucurbits look great, onions look ok but weed control is a struggle, with escapees beginning to size up into linebackers. Summer cover crops going in, and I am amazed at how little seed is needed to get a good stand when drilling versus lightly discing, which we did for 40 years.

Retail and wholesale sales still strong, but not the crazy levels of the pandemic. Labor is still a problem. Our H2A gents arrived about 2 weeks late, and one of our returnees was supposed to arrive June 5 and is still not here. The program is a mess and working very poorly for us this year, a source of contention and expense.

(Argyle NY) We've had lots of equipment, pump, and water challenges this summer, but most crops have done well. The overwintered onion trials show that Forum is better than all others grown including Pentium, Jetset and Stuttgarter, though Forum will likely not available very soon—disappointing. Gray aphids are an increasing problem in our summer brassicas, and we are trying to control them before they get to the fall crops that will go out soon.

Markets and online sales have been steady but not great. We have a super crew this year which makes things smoother and has allowed us some vacation time! Winter tunnel prep will be underway soon. We will continue to search for a long-term, full-time manager.

(Little Compton RI) We are in another severe drought. Minus last summer, it has been 15 years of July/August drought here. We have seven properties we farm, five that have wells, two of which will go dry next week.

Where we know we will run out of water, we grow winter squash and early onions and shallots. Winter squash was watered early, and the foliage is massive which creates its own microclimate, helping to sustain the crop across the finish line without additional water. Onions are coming in now, so their water needs are over.

We bought a MegaNet inline sprinkler system eight years ago and this year upgraded the base delivery lines with the new technology that doesn't waste water or pressure because of loose fittings. It cost \$1000 but worth every penny for performance and less headaches. For tips on the system, call Zoie at Brookdale Fruit Farm.

The deer population in our town has easily doubled in the last five years! We are using half doses of Hinder and Neptune's Harvest fish fertilizer to keep them off the sweet potato vines, and it works on other vegetables too.

Learned a hard lesson last year. Had a spray tank with BT and copper leftover from a spraying five days previous. When I went out to spray another Brassica field, I figured it was going to be the same mix so just add more water and Dipel and off I went! Well that cocktail of benign spray material became a toxic brew and I messed up two acres of cauliflower and broccoli which were injured and then got host of diseases. I blamed the problems on other issues like the wet season, staying in the cold frames too long, etc. Well this year I did it one more time, just to teach me the folly of being lazy about tank cleanup.

Farmers' markets are on fire down here near coastal vacation land. We are getting 10-15% higher prices at city markets than at our hometown stand, and very few complaints. Labor is a challenge as we continue losing help to bigger businesses like supermarkets that starting folks at \$22 an hour around here. Glad we cut back acreage by 15% because of fuel and fertilizer costs, but even now can't get it all done in the day to day.

LEAF ANALYSIS IS IMPORTANT TO GUIDE BERRY FERTILIZATION

Leaf, or tissue analysis tells you what nutrients your berry crop is actually taking up from the soil. Samples cost \$28 analyzed through Dairy One in NY. <https://dairyone.com/services/forage-laboratory-services/plant-tissue-analysis/>.

Strawberries: Sample the first fully expanded leaves after renovation or within the first 6 weeks after harvest. Raspberries: Sample non-fruiting canes between August 1 and 20. Blueberries: Sample between July 1 and August 30. Collect at least 30 healthy undamaged leaves that are well exposed to light and represent the average condition of the planting. Remove petioles and put leaves in a dry paper bag or perforated plastic bag and immediately label with name of the area the sample represents.

RESOURCES FROM THE UVM AGRICULTURAL ENGINEERING TEAM

Andy Chamberlin and Chris Callahan

Our website <https://go.uvm.edu/ageng> is full of post-harvest (wash/pack), protected culture (greenhouse and high tunnel) and other sustainable agriculture resources.

Join 910 subscribers and watch some of our 220 videos on our YouTube channel for technical tips and farm visit videos at <https://go.uvm.edu/agengyt>. Listen to 75 episodes of the Ag Engineering Podcast for details on tools, tips and techniques to improve farm sustainability at <https://agengpodcast.com>.

SUMMER POLLINATOR REPORT

Laura Johnson, UVM Extension pollinator support specialist

Summer and winter squash bloom observations were conducted between dawn and late morning. By noon, squash flowers are closed, closing, or wilting. Blossom visits were dominated by three bees during the month of June; honeybees (*Apis mellifera*), squash bees (*Peponapis pruinosa*), and bumble bees (*Bombus* spp.). Smaller bumble bee workers have been regularly observed as queen bees stay in their nests to rear their colonies. Male squash bees remain inside blossoms overnight, while females rest in their nests about 2” below ground until the next day, nearby or within the squash plantings. Less commonly observed native bees, like the green sweat bee (*Augochlorini* spp.), were also occasionally found foraging in blooms. Be on the lookout for other natives emerging mid-summer and found in squash blossoms, like the two-spotted long-horned bee (*Melissodes bimaculatus*). I was very excited to find one this week!

Non-bee insects found in squash blooms included striped and spotted cucumber beetles. A 1964 University of California [article](#) mentions that cucumber beetles are capable of transferring pollen from male to female flowers and may contribute to pollination, but their destructive qualities to a crop likely outweigh the beneficial act of pollination.