



Vermont Vegetable and Berry News – August 18, 2015
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REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

(Plainfield) It looks like my blueberries are as good, or better than two years ago in terms of production. No sign of spotted wing drosophila. I have given up on fall raspberries and have expanded my summer raspberries to Prelude, Nova, Taylor and Encore; all pick-your-own. It is working to offer a lower price in exchange for weeding, so the place looks good. Elderberries are being bird-seeded around the place so I will have lots more in the future. I have cut out the branches that had the blueberry virus (witches broom.) I cleaned the pruning shears with chlorine solution between cuts and sprayed the cut ends with a chlorine solution. I marked the bushes so we'll see if it comes back or not. I hope not as I'd hate to remove those nice bushes. Another great season. I have had some pickers from farther away as I'm told some places in the CT river valley had a late frost, and places at higher elevations (I'm at 1,400 ft.) got more winter kill. I had broken branches from the weight of the berries. A policy note: Keep protecting these state listed ag soils, they are amazing! <http://solartaskforce.vermont.gov/contact>. We need to think about energy policy integrated with food policy. Food from far away takes a lot of energy. Please protect state-listed ag soils from large solar farms. Good soil cannot be replaced!

(Fletcher) We have not been a regular reporting farm, but feel compelled to pass on that our PYO blueberry farm suffered about a 30% drop in yield this year. My theory is that it was due to the sustained sub-zero weather we experienced last winter.

(Cambridge) A surprisingly good year for blueberries. The rain in June produced gorgeous, plump berries that ripened later than usual in July but came in well. Most of the berries were in the bottom two-thirds of the bushes, below snow line, but abundance still overwhelming, especially after another cold winter. The only variety that didn't produce was Chandler which is rated for zone 5, so not surprising to see empty bushes in our zone 4. No SWD and Japanese beetles also pretty minimal. The bluejays have gotten more aggressive this week but season is winding down anyway. Best year of garlic ever. The only catastrophe is about a quarter acre of rhubarb that developed a fungus that has all but killed it to the ground. The wet conditions in June really made a mess of the planting. I had presumed rhubarb to be near indestructible but not the case. I have 200 more plants waiting in pots but haven't yet figured out where to put them and what to do with the sickly plants that had been pretty well established.

(Craftsbury) This has been a challenging blueberry season. Long, deep winter, late and cold spring with multiple late May and even June frosts has reduced our berry production by as much as half. We have hundreds of bushes which never bore a berry. Ripening has been slowed by cool days and cooler nights and we cannot keep up with demand. Our pick is down by about half for this stage of the season but the number of visitors is up by almost 40%. Many first-time visitors are here because of their own bushes' failure to blossom and fruit. We know of at least two farms in the Northeast Kingdom which did not open due to crop failure. Anecdotal stories are of a similar vein: low budding, few blossoms, little and no fruit. The berries we do produce are a bit tart but very large and plump. Our hope is for a few hot and sunny days and warmer nights to force ripening as the season winds down. We have received reports of abundant raspberries throughout the area and we ate our first blackberries on August 15th.

(Charlotte) Our farm is nearing the end of the blueberry season which has been very good due to the rain that we have had. We are getting new fields ready for this fall and next spring for planting. We haven't seen SWD yet, but we keep looking at our fall raspberries. Hopefully it will not hit hard this year.

(East Dorset) I don't think we have quite the crop in 2015 as we did in 2014 but we are close, about 10% off. We are about a week away from being picked out. I don't think many will be left on the bushes either. We have had many new pickers which accounts for our earlier closing date. We have also had a number of pickers who said their normal place did not have any berries. We had one day off due to rain all summer. We had more than a few unripened berries in the field for a while, then they ripened in the last week. They may have been slow to ripen due to cooler night temps we had a couple of weeks ago.

(Burlington) Onion crop finishing up. Bridgers were great, finishing nicely prior to downy mildew problems. Liking the looks of Cabernet red onion; earlier than other reds we've grown with a nice thin neck. Leaving our yellow storage onions with rampant downy mildew in the ground, as the necks seem like they are getting thinner despite the foliar problems. When we've pulled diseased onions early in other years we've never been able to get the necks to cure. Without much to lose, we are leaving them in the ground this year to see if we end up with some storable onions. Liking Elonora basil for our later summer slot. By no means immune to basil downy mildew, but much improved in comparison to non-resistant cultivars. Wondering about our fall diseases of Brassicas, which have been so limited the past two relatively dry autumns. Hoping for the same this year. Still no late blight.

(Westminster West) It may surprise many growers north of Windham County that we are in a very deep drought here. Though we just received a nice 3/4" rain on top of last week's 1.5" rain, but these are the first rains since June. Constant running of drip lines have kept things alive and even managed a bit of growth to hold on till rains arrived.

Little disease pressure is the upside of low rainfall. Low weed pressure is another benefit. Picking early ripening winter squash, spaghetti and acorns. Main squash crops and pumpkins are looking nice, actually had to trim Delicata vines as they wouldn't stop setting fruit. Onion crop looks excellent; early Bridgers are in and getting shipped, Walla Wallas same deal. Storage and red onions are holding up and still bulbing out, look great. After 3 years of using white plastic mulch I can now unequivocally say it does work for reducing or eliminating bottom rot on the Walla Walls. We tried silver, but it was way too bright for workers to weed. Onions are one of those tempting crops that promise good profits but require high maintenance with spray program, irrigating and fertility levels--and some luck! My investment in an excellent sprayer a few years ago and installing irrigation really paid off this year. Tunnel tomatoes are selling well and second tunnel just coming in. Tunnel raspberries started late this year but are coming into production now with excellent size and flavor. Had very heavy spider mite and white fly pressure early, but now under control using biological releases. Thanks to everyone that came to the first Annual VVBGA summer party here, it was a magical evening for everyone involved and well worth all the planning and work that went into it judging by all the nice comments we received.

(Northfield) Our biggest experimental breakthrough of the month is playing with drywall stilts for tomato pruning, plum and cucumber picking. Our average team height is short! The flexible footer accommodates our raised beds decently.

(Waterbury Center) Garlic is drying nicely after a pretty good harvest. Great melon crop this year, both in taste and numbers, partially because we've had some hot, sunny weather during ripening. We had one stretch of cooler, rainier days and the taste definitely dropped off. Peppers are looking good. The summer-bearing raspberries produced well, and the fall crop is starting to take shape. Not a crazy amount of Japanese beetles here, interested in how bad the pressure is on other people's raspberries. Markets seem strong. Great time at the Farmer Olympics last Wednesday at Maple Wind Farm! Thanks to NOFA and other organizers for putting on a great event.

(Plainfield NH) Recent rains have lessened the drought conditions as we continue late seedings and transplanting for fall. Weather was tough this year; we never really recovered from the very dry spring. Strawberries were doing well until 6 days of greasy, damp conditions helped the Botrytis and Anthracnose bloom. Close picking by the field crew helped in keeping later fruit clean and marketable. A light blueberry crop (50%) this year, due to much winter injury. Wholesale sales down a bit from years past, but farmstand sales remain strong, Weather this year got us behind in doing things in a "timely" fashion. Weeds got ahead, and field crew worked too many hours just trying to keep things in some sort of balance. Insect pressure a bit lighter for us this year. Trying to maintain enough protectant sprays to keep foliage healthy on fall crops. Have missed some violent thunderstorms the last couple of weeks, but some of my nearby farmer friends have not been so lucky.

(Newburyport MA) Good weather, good crops, good sales, but OH THE WEEDS! So busy with harvesting and sales we just can't get to the weeds.

UPDATE FROM THE UVM PLANT DIAGNOSTIC CLINIC

Ann Hazelrigg

Allium-Continue to see damage from onion leek moth. One suspected larvae was tunneling around a garlic bulb. <http://web.entomology.cornell.edu/shelton/leek-moth/description.html>
Seeing all the usual suspects on onion crops including: Botrytis, Alternaria and thrips. Cornell is going to offer an Allium school in Vermont and New York (Albany area) sometime in September in the late afternoon and will discuss all things onion, including latest findings on leek moth. Date and location has not been selected yet. We will send out the info when we get it.

Brassicas-Continue to see damage from black rot in kale, Brussels sprouts, etc. Look for V-shaped yellow lesion on leaf edges.

http://vegetablemndonline.ppath.cornell.edu/factsheets/Crucifers_BR.htm

Leaf spots (many fungi) are picking up on fall plantings. Be sure to remove any earlier plantings to get rid of any extra inoculum.

Cucurbits-Downy mildew has been ID'd in Massachusetts. This fungus-like organism blows in on storm fronts and wipes out crops (melon, squash, pumpkin, cukes) quickly. If you have lost your late cucumber planting in the past, it is likely this disease. Look for yellow spots on upper leaf surface, somewhat angular, with dirty-looking spores on undersides.

<https://ag.umass.edu/fact-sheets/cucurbits-downy-mildew>. You can track progress of the disease here <http://cdm.ipmpipe.org/scripts/map.php>. Till under old plantings and keep leaf tissue protected with fungicides. For latest fungicide recommendations go to:

<https://nevegetable.org/crops/disease-control-7>. Watch for plectosporium on pumpkins, summer squash, zucchini and gourds. <https://ag.umass.edu/fact-sheets/cucurbits-plectosporium>

White flecking should be obvious on stems and they become very brittle. Scab may be on the increase due to rains on summer squash, melons, watermelon and pumpkins. Look for small sunken holes in fruit with greenish sporulation on fruits. See:

<http://ag.umass.edu/fact-sheets/cucurbits-scab>. Control by rotation and fungicides before fruiting.

Solanaceae- Early blight and Septoria are prevalent on lower tomato leaves. Keep up fertility to help the plants 'outrun' the disease. Just ID'd late blight on tomato in Monkton and Bristol.

Early blight and hopper burn common on early potatoes. Black cankers caused by Fusarium spp. diagnosed on wilting peppers. Also, just diagnosed the first case of bacterial canker in pepper in the state. This very serious disease also attacks tomato and can quickly wipe out a high tunnel.

http://vegetablemndonline.ppath.cornell.edu/factsheets/Tomato_Bacterial.htm