

Vermont Vegetable and Berry News – August 19, 2008

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Reports from the Field

(Woodbury) The sun has gone a long way to making me feel better. I am excited about the prospect of killing some weeds again. The fruit count on our winter squash is really low. Except for my Walla Walla's, onions are bulbing up and are looking pretty good. Having tried Mustang and Cortland and being happy with strength of tops, I am dropping Copra next year. Will mow potato tops with the forecast of a good sunny stretch for this upcoming week. I want them in the barn and out of the field. Sales continue to be strong, and I grateful for the support of a loyal customer base.

(Plainfield NH) There is an old saying that goes "I cried because I had no shoes until I met a man who had no feet" and I guess is how I feel about this summer. So many times we have dodged the bullet (hail, high winds and microbursts) that have gotten others in our area, most recently on 8/16, so I am beginning to feel pretty lucky. The prolonged moisture damaged the strawberry crop and all but wiped out summer brambles. We have battled hornworms, Septoria, Alternaria and Botrytis to name a few as well as seeing a couple of uglies never seen before on our farm: Sclerotinia showed up in one of the tomato greenhouses and Phytophthora showed up in the peppers (and in well drained soils on a raised bed at that). Earworm showed up in the early blocks of corn (not in high numbers, but we found it in some ears) earlier than we have ever seen it; we normally don't set up traps for it until mid-late July. Pulled a fair crop of onions last week, the galinsoga was coming on strong and the purple blotch had pretty well stopped any more growth. Blueberry crop was huge and now we are beginning to pick the fall raspberries. Starting to tuck in the fall cover crops. A planting of lettuce and cabbage yet to put out. Cool weather slowing maturation of later corn crops. Weather pattern seems to be improving and so are the dispositions of the folks who have lived in rain gear all summer.

(Rochester) Floods in the White River valley caused extensive damage around us, but spared our berry farm. But the wet weather promoted another round of mold for the last good week of our raspberry crop, and also kept the you-pickers away. The raspberry yield is down 30% compared to last year even though the crop was at least as good. But the blueberries are spectacularly abundant, and our 5 year-old blackberries are showing plenty of fruit (for the first time) which should be ripe by Labor Day weekend.

(Westminster West) Yes, the rain has stopped by gosh. Onions all in with the yields a bit below expectations, the sweet varieties large but the storage types a bit small. Pumpkins ripening well with many fully colored! Winter squash however is a unknown at this point. Lots of huge foliage but fruit not as plentiful or as ripe as it should be, hopefully this week's expected sun and warmth with dry the fields and ripen the fruit. Tunnel raspberries coming on large and sweet, yellow jacket traps seem to be helping a lot.

(Killington) Tomatoes, tomatoes....lots of them and they taste great. We grow Jet Star and Beef Steak in the hoop house. I like the idea of putting laying hens in the hoop house in winter but what about security? Problems this season with uneven germination in green beans. I never know what will happen. Cucumber, garlic, onions and squash are all doing well. I have leaf mold in the hoop house, cuke beetles on the winter squash and some flea beetle on the Asian greens. The turkeys are still in the barn. There's been too much rain to put them out. This week is supposed to be dry so out they'll go. Not enough hay to winter over as many head of beef as usual.

(Salisbury NH) The cucumbers loved all this rain but our tomatoes are screaming for hot, dry, SUNNY weather. Our irrigation well and small stream look like it's spring time with their levels. Can't seem to pick enough string beans and it's even harder when we have to wait for a dry spell to pick them. Peppers have been fantastic. Weeds have been even better. At this point we've pretty much given up on them. Succession plantings have been working better this year. We haven't run out of items as much as last year. Tons and tons of Japanese beetles. Potato crop yields seem low compared to last year. Beets have been really good too. If we only had another month of hot sunny weather we'd be all set!

(S. Royalton) The tomato hornworms hatched on schedule at the end of July and one spraying of Bt appears to have done the trick. The zucchini has succumbed to some virus but everyone was getting tired of picking it anyway. Fall crops are looking good and starting to mow down early crop areas and put in cover crops. We are thinking about topping the Brussels sprouts.

(Londonderry) After a few weeks of nutrient deficient looking greenhouse tomato plants, the leaves are darkening and the flower/fruit development is fantastic. That's because we did get sun finally the last few days and I side-dressed with Pro-Boost (10-0-0) and top dressed with compost. Squash bugs are on the rise. They seem to have increased with cool nights. I used Entrust with Neptune's fish/seaweed seemed successful. Cucumber beetles causing some bacterial wilt on Asian cucumbers in hoop house. Picked bugs and sprayed with fish/ seaweed and entrust same ratio as above. Entrust worked well on both counts, very, very little needed. Finished one of the best Garlic harvest in our history! Proper wide spacing, removal of mulch early and cultivation have paid off! Nine varieties of different shades and size some go back to '98 and '99. Interestingly, they all seem to be very red this year. I am a believer that the wet years increase color. All in all a very wet period with little to no sun has us a few weeks late on major harvest and our yields are nearly half on many crops. I am trying to be patient with potatoes to increase yield but, the risk of disease damage is growing exponentially. Our potatoes are all fingerlings and in "A" condition they fetch \$4.00+ per lb.