



VERMONT VEGETABLE AND BERRY GROWER NEWS – August 2, 2021

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

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REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

(Guildhall) Potato crop looks nice; all varieties have filled in their rows (except Red Norland which never does). Leafhopper pressure has been minimal, Colorado potato beetle has been bad, but only because of an ill-timed first spray. Our relationship with our contracted pesticide applicator has been strained this year. Timeliness matters when controlling CPB, and we will certainly be doing our own spraying next year.

Weed control in the potatoes is good, but we skipped a week of cultivation waiting on an insect spray. Knowing it could have been perfect weed control is frustrating. Pumpkins and squash are stalled with the wet weather. Hopefully they'll come back, but we sell most of our pumpkins the first week of September, so we'll see. Construction on the potato barn addition continues and should be complete by 9/1. We started digging red skin new potatoes July 19, the earliest we've harvested since coming Vermont, but still got many that were baseball sized.

(Westminster) July really slammed us with close to 20 inches of rain, finishing with 5 inches on July 29-30 alone. That's obviously bad news for lettuce, causing lots of bottom rot, compounded by lack of sunlight that prevents the lettuce, especially the romaine, from building a "frame" and ending up with a thin plant. We'll see what the wet weather will mean for other crops as the summer goes on.

Our winter squash has started to show a little powdery mildew but, more worryingly, the bees may have been discouraged from pollination because of the bad weather. We've been harvesting beets and carrots but have done very little with bunched beets this year because leaf disease has meant poor tops. On the plus side, it's saved us labor in a season when we're very short of good help. The kale is going strong, although it's tough for the workers out there slogging through six inches of water to pick it. Otherwise, the sweet corn, off to a slow start, has picked up, and we're having a bumper blueberry season.

(Burlington) Diseases are moving in everywhere with the recent wet period. Downy mildew and Stemphylium in onions, even the resistant cultivars, Pseudomonas in arugula, powdery mildew in tunnels cucumbers, Anthracnose in watermelon, basil downy mildew in resistant cultivars, to name a few. Coupled with early and abundant potato leafhopper, CPB, onion thrips, flea beetles, and others, it has been a more intensive spraying year than usual.

CPBs are getting notably harder to control, suspecting gradual resistance to Spinosad developing. Released *Pediobius* to control bean beetles for the first time, but I think it was too late. I'll shoot for earliest larval appearance next year.

Doom and gloom aside, harvests have been plentiful and good quality, with some of our best quality summer carrots and beets in several years, though Romance carrot, our sub for Yaya, isn't impressing with its tougher texture. Early and abundant crop of Walla Walla onions, which sized up much larger much earlier than our planned early onion, Bridger. Still really liking Norstar for our first early hard yellow onion, with good size, solid DM resistance, and excellent dry down. Appreciating more and more getting onions in and out early to beat the DM pressure, but also to field cure during the longer days of late July and early August.

CSA members are super happy, enjoying all the fun of coming to the farm, PYO, and hanging out in the flowers. It is great to have the twice weekly enthusiasm of hundreds. I hope this can all continue, as the covid tea leaves are not looking good right now.

(Westminster West) For July we hit a record 20" rain! And the year started out looking like a repeat of last year's drought down here; things change! The rain has been a mixed blessing, I have not been able to get cover crops on the garlic field or any other field that was waiting for it. The onion crop is amazing, huge, and productive. Hardly any thrips and surprisingly, no disease that I can see. Tops are still green and healthy although some varieties are ready, so tops are down.

Potatoes look great, a little weedy because who can cultivate in the rain! Same on winter squash, some weeds but look like a terrific fruit set, pumpkins as well, getting big early! Hemp links good and a great melon crop so far. Garlic looks great with a very robust yield and top quality, no diseases at all. Already pulling and selling leeks!

Tunnel crops have been great, even with rivers running down the tomato beds, stunning yields! Proof that I have been under watering my crop for years. Celery crop is super and a nice addition to our mix. Sales at the farmers' market are still breaking records and wholesale is steady and robust.

(Salisbury NH) Seems more like a 'report from the ponds.' No need for watering this month! Luckily our property drains well but July has just been so rainy. The other problem is cooler temperatures. Cool weather (53 degrees) this morning feels like fall. Great for starting spinach but many crops are not happy. Eggplants just sitting there sulking, plagued by cucumber beetles. Every time the vine crops start out looking great, then beetles and (I assume) bacterial wilt hit. Lots of customers and we have been raising prices to be more in line with actual cost to grow and harvest. So far, they're still buying.

Finally picked string beans, customers have been begging for them. Love Maxibel, it's slender and long and so far, prolific. ProtekNet does really work for keeping flea beetles off the arugula.

It is kind of a pain to uncover to harvest (and weed) but it's the only way to get arugula I can actually sell.

We like Katarina cabbage. It has strong growth and nice-looking heads. Not sure why red cabbage varieties seem to grow more slowly. When planting at the same time as any of the green varieties, my red cabbages are always way behind. Sales are brisk but definitely it slows up when it's raining. Sun comes out, then so do the customers.

(Plainfield NH) Weather and labor issues dominate daily activities. A 180-degree shift in the weather, now with so much moisture and sweatshirts needed in July. With moisture comes disease pressure, so trying to keep tomatoes, field vines, potatoes, and onions in decent enough shape to reach maturity, and that means a lot of fungicide spraying when the weather is like this. Potatoes are looking much better because they are on high, dry ground, but carrots and onions are in peril if the wet weather doesn't let up.

Strawberry crop was a good one, but season cut short with the wet spell commencing on June 30 with a microburst of high winds and 1 inch of rain in 20 minutes. Now into a short blueberry crop due in part to winter injury in some fields; this might have been a result of dry conditions most of summer 2020.

Labor issues abated by the arrival of 2 more H2A on July 20, family members of a couple of the guys who work here. The average age of our field crew is 55. Still, we are plodding along and grateful for our good folks. Markets remain strong for us, but not the crazy demand of 2020.

(Argyle NY) July was a cooler month than last year probably due more to cloudiness than anything else. Our farm is in a rain shadow, so we don't get rains that nearby places get. Up till last Thursday we had 4.5 inches for the month. Perfect, and then Thursday we got 2.1 inches. Around us got 4 to 5 inches, which sent floods to us and put our irrigation pump underwater. It's the second time it's happened in 22 years, but the last time was 2 years ago!

Angular leaf spot on an older planting of cucumbers and Septoria on some tomatoes are our worst diseases right now. Flea beetles and a bit of thrips are the insects of the day. Weeding and cultivating fill most days. Fall plantings are just about completed and look good. Much smaller amounts than last year and happy for it as we continue to slow down.

(Little Compton RI) We once again seem disconnected to the greater New England weather map down on the southern end of things. While some are drowning, we've been irrigating for some time! What we can water is growing well, what we can't is going south.

Insect pressure is light this year, but diseases are not. In RI we have a version of leaf mold across the state call Stemphylium. It has wiped of certain early tomato houses. We are trying to keep it a bay with Oxidate and copper. Bought the new Petra backpack mist blower. A great machine and inexpensive but plug-in, not battery powered. Worth it for Oxidate application.

Got a game changer new tool from Budding Cultivators. They offer a plastic mulch scratcher which is incredible for keeping sides of plastic clean, especially if used in combination with Tilmor's version of the old star-wheel cultivator following behind to break up clods and re-hill the soil to hold the plastic down. Great video on Instagram: look up Sassafrass Farm and checkout how they use this new gem. All the parts and pieces cost \$800 or so.

Trying to keep the deer off our winter squash with three-prong approach: electric temporary fence that is baited, mannequin with full garb (hat and sunglasses) and night solar spotlights on him and talk radio as well, and all parked next to dead pickup truck! So far so good!

Markets very strong at this point. If major Covid restrictions come back our city farmers' market may go down again.

UPDATE FROM UVM EXTENSION AG ENGINEERING

Cleaning Tools and Supplies for Produce Farms. Farms of all sizes all have tools and equipment that need to be cleaned and sanitized. That equipment varies in how well it has been designed to be cleaned, its level of hygienic design. Some items require lots of effort and specific tools to clean adequately, while others are straight-forward. What's the best brush to clean totes? Is spending money on an expensive squeegee to get water off the floor worth it? This blog post and video highlight some things to look for in cleaning tools and supplies for use on the farm: <https://go.uvm.edu/cleaningtools>

WEEKLY VEGETABLE PEST SCOUTING REPORTS FROM UVM

Funded in part by the VVBGA, this project provides useful information to growers about what's showing up on a variety of vegetable crops. Over the course of the growing season, major insect pests and diseases found at UVM's Horticultural Research and Education Center in S. Burlington are reported out by the Vermont Entomology and Participatory Action Research Team <https://www.uvm.edu/agroecology/research/vepart/>. All current and past reports can be found at: go.uvm.edu/pests

INSECT AND DISEASE WALK FOR COMMERCIAL GROWERS

Thursday August 12, 3:30 - 5:30. Bear Roots Farm, Williamstown VT

Join UVM Extension pathologist Ann Hazelrigg, and entomologists Vic Izzo and Scott Lewins, for a field walk to learn about, identify, and discuss solutions for this year's pests and diseases, including integrated pest management (IPM) techniques. This workshop will be hosted at a certified organic mixed vegetable farm. It is free for all commercial growers BIPOC attendees. Pre-registration required. For more information and registration go to: <https://nofavt.org/events/pest-disease-walk-commercial-growers-0>

TECHINICAL SUPPORT AVAILABLE FOR WASH-PACK PROJECTS THIS FALL

Our team of specialists from SCRUB (Sanitizing and Cleaning Resources for yoUr Business) is available to help you overcome a post-harvest bottleneck, or to improve your wash/pack in one of six topic areas listed below. Space is limited to 15 farms per topic. To indicate interest in participating, complete this short form <https://forms.gle/JYVeJVdfUKsGh3dz9> by **August 16**.

Participating farms that sign up for individual assistance with their projects will be asked to take part in the virtual workshop with other growers working on the same topic, where challenges, plans and resources are discussed as a group. As a participant, you will: Complete a draft project improvement plan (a template will be provided to guide this process); Attend and actively participate in the workshop; Implement the revised project improvement plan on your farm; Document your results with photos and a brief description of what you did and share with workshop leaders.

SCRUB Workshop Schedule. Wednesdays 6:30-8:30 pm. These will be edited and posted later.

September 1. Bin Blitz. Experienced growers and UVMs Ag Engineering present new strategies and cleaning tools to increase the efficiency and efficacy of bin cleaning, sanitation, and management practices. Lead growers show and tell their bin systems, with lessons learned. Participants leave with a plan to improve/ implement new practices.

September 8. Low Cost and High Value. Evaluate low-cost (either money or time) improvements that make a big difference. Experience growers show and tell the thrifty improvements they made and summarize lessons learned., including trade-offs of spending money (or not) to lower risks and increase efficiency.

September 15. Wash/Pack Floors. Learn to improve or repair a concrete floor so that it is smooth and easy to clean. This workshop highlights concrete repair, cleaning and sanitation techniques, water management, products, and resources, as well as show and tell from experienced growers, and Chris Callahan (UVM's Engineering)

September 22. Wash Water Management. Experienced growers and facilitators dig into the fundamentals of managing produce wash water, including show and tell with lessons learned about wash water management, use and monitoring of sanitizers. All participants leave with a plan to improve/ implement new practice

September 29. Tools for Employee Management and Empowerment. Develop management strategies/systems to retain and empower high-value workers, while improving crew morale and culture. Learn from experienced managers of loyal and reliable crews, the pros and cons of their

current management systems, and how they came to be. Participants leave with resources and a plan to improve/ implement one or more new practices or strategies.

October 6. Bubblers/Aerators for Greens Washing. For growers wanting to install or improve a greens bubbler/aerator. Get feedback from growers who built / improved their own systems. Examine designs and DIY resources, as well as perceived quality and efficiency gains from bubblers as compared to other washing methods.

Questions? Hans Estrin, Produce Safety Specialist and CAPS Coordinator, UVM Extension.
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