



Vermont Vegetable and Berry News – August 2, 2024
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<https://www.uvm.edu/extension/horticulture/commercial>

SIGN UP TO BE ELIGIBLE FOR NRCS-VERMONT FUNDING NEXT YEAR

You must "enroll" by Friday August 23. This is to express interest, it is not a commitment, or an assurance of funding. Send this simple [application form](#) to your [local NRCS service center](#); contact them with questions. The [Environmental Quality Incentives Program](#) (EQUIP) and the [Conservation Stewardship Program](#) (CSP) have a LOT of money available to support the implementation of a wide range of practices on fruit and vegetable farms. Be sure to check both boxes on the application. If you farm in other states, check their NRCS application deadlines.

NOW'S THE TIME FOR PERENNIAL FRUIT LEAF ANALYSIS

[Leaf analysis](#) (aka tissue or foliar analysis) is better than soil testing for determining an optimal fertilization program for berries and tree fruit because it reveals exactly what the plant has succeeded in taking up. (Soil tests are still necessary for monitoring soil pH.) Leaves should be analyzed when fully mature but before they begin to senesce. Early to mid-August is a good time to sample most crops. Lab options include [Dairy One](#) (comes with Cornell recommendations), [Penn State](#), and many land grant university soil test labs.

REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

(Guildhall) Been a disappointing month over here. On July 11 the Connecticut River came up again (repeat of 2023) and wiped out 14 acres, the usual 25% we plant on low land. But then it came up 3 or 4 feet higher than last summer and took a 5-acre field that shouldn't flood. The water sat for 72 hours. So 19 acres flooded, representing 36% of the crop. Pretty bleak. Potato plants melted into the ground immediately.

I've been keeping the Agency of Ag, FSA, and the press (AP, 7Days, VT Digger, Fox weather, Vermont Chronicle) up to date about the challenge and need for aid, but to no avail so far. After a week and no positive word from the State, friends started a GoFundMe on our behalf, to try to help. A suggestion for farmers up against uninsured disasters: Don't wait! Farms that had GoFundMe's going the day after the rain have met and exceeded their goals. Ours, starting a week after the event, has been less successful.

The good news: there's still 33 acres of potatoes, which were looking great before the flood, and are now being pampered with weekly foliar feedings of boron, magnesium, kelp, and every other thing I can think of. All based on weekly petiole sampling. We even organized a hand weeding of a 22-acre field, something I've never done before; 17 people, mostly kids, got it done in 5 hours. Another silver lining, we had planted our most important varieties on high ground, except

we lost our Peter Wilcox. Natasha Gold, russets, chippers, reds, blues, and fingerlings are alive and well.

Looking to the future, we're making some big changes. These summer floods are no longer 10 or more years apart. Switching from a 4-year rotation to a 3-year will allow us to avoid planting on the floodplain. Potatoes are too expensive to plant there (particularly with increased fertilizer prices), there's rarely seed available in July for replanting, and breaking down/cleaning of planting equip takes at least a week. I think we can keep up good practices up on a 3 year rotation, including a fallow third year in a cover crop.

Lastly, if you need potatoes for your CSA, farmstand or store this fall, call me. Keeping our potatoes out of the produce terminal and moving more to better paying markets is going to make all the difference this year. Be safe out there y'all. Matthew Linehan, Sparrow Arc Farm, sparrowarcfarm@gmail.com or 207-323-4439

(Burlington) What we've learned from two years of July flooding: eggplant appears to be more flood tolerant than most vegetables, surviving inundation and bouncing back to produce new flowers and fruit two years' running. Most peppers, potatoes, and cucurbits are losers along with annual herbs and beans. Tomatoes, brassicas, and sunflowers are intermediate. Onions are frustratingly flood tolerant: but we lose them to food safety concerns when they flood. By the time we can get the plastic out of the crop they've ripened up to good looking bulbs, this year with very low thrips counts and no sign of downy mildew. Alas. In the flower garden, verbena is a winner, zinnias are pretty good too. Snapdragons and calendula suffered.

Our tunnels have been a key to our success for many years, but the past two summers have driven that point home, allowing us to continue harvesting popular cucumbers and tomatoes into the fall. Combined with a little patch of unflooded ground we've been able to stay in salad crops and fresh herbs. Taken together with the stored crops rescued from flooding we have produced good CSA shares and expect to be able to do so for the season as the replanted field crops start to mature in September.

We are looking hard at our crop mix and thinking about which crops have too long a season with lots of stranded costs (e.g. onions, celeriac), and considering crops we aren't growing now that might be a good hedge in the event we are flooded like sweet corn (tall), summer romaine (quick), summer baby spinach (even quicker). We are hearing mostly support from our CSA members, though we will see if two flood summers will shrink our retention and signup more than it did for this spring.

Just like it is rarely good to make headlines, it stinks to have useful experience preparing for floods, though we immediately thought about how we could do better next time. Farm on!

(Marlboro) Raspberries are mostly done. Taylor is still producing a few and then we wait for the late Prelude crop. Blueberry yield is smaller than last year. First Spinosad spray was 7/24 (one day later than last year). Hoping to get a few more weeks. We wonder if the dry season means a bit less SWD pressure? Also, not seeing a lot of Japanese Beetles (but knock on wood, probably

jinxed it). The ExcludeNet portion of the blueberry field still looks great. Late variety is coming along nicely with no SWD. Great growing year for veggies, and good response at the farm stand.

(Grand Isle) Very good blueberry crop this year. Will be done in another 10-14 days. Japanese beetle population was down considerably. Unsure if covering the grass areas with plastic decreased the population, we think it made the difference, but no way to know for sure. Years past when picking berries there would be a cloud of beetles emerging from the plants. This year we have to look for beetles. We are collecting on average about 100 beetles a day.

(Corinth) Somewhere around the end of June there was a rain event that bleached the tops of berries, apples, grapes and red maples. My red and white grape leaves looked like a linen tablecloth. They are coloring back yellow-green after three weeks. The tops of apple trees bleached out and are now turning brown. Young red maple leaves on the SW side are bleached, curled and twisted. Others have also noticed leaves on plants turning brown and dying. Anyone else experience this? I'm curious if it was just this area or statewide and what chemical might have been in the rain.

(Saratoga Springs NY) We finished planting fall brassicas and endives and got onions harvested this week. Onions look great, benefiting from fertigation earlier in the season. We topped them before laying them out on benches to cure due to leek moth pressure. Garlic is cured and looks ok, a little smaller than last year. The fall carrots have germed; the stand is less than ideal, but ok. Nice yields on pickles this year! Tomatoes are about at their peak and recent markets have been strong. It's time to rip out cukes and summer squash and turn the beds over to fall greens.

Weeds to contend with everywhere. It's dry (storms are mostly missing us).

(Plainfield NH) Extreme heat followed by 4.5 inches of rain in 72 hours terminated a great strawberry crop mid-stream. Despite all the rains and flooding, we have been droughty here until last week. Mostly the growing season has been pretty good but certainly on the hotter side.

Picking melons the earliest ever, by 12 days. And not just a few. Everything seems really early. Wondering if increased levels of CO₂ are contributing to the growth spurts we are seeing, and farmers around here are seeing record yields of hay as well.

Using plastic and drip tape on almost everything (a change from overhead that we now use primarily on strawberries and onions). Despite the added cost it is a game changer for the good.

Our biggest additional expense is animal intervention. Skunks, birds, raccoons...but deer are by far the worst. They may be more loathsome than CPB and harder to control. We are using Trico but it's not been very effective. Baited fencing seems to be sort of working. We have a few permits from the state fish and game, but the herd is so big that deer are out in the fields at all hours of the day so taking a few will hardly make a dent in the population.

(Argyle NY) Warmer than normal spring made some crops earlier like rhubarb and strawberries. Irrigation was hooked up in April and didn't have to be broken down because of freezing weather. Rain has been light and infrequent so we have been continually irrigating.

This spring into summer has been the lightest amount of flea beetles, cucumber beetles and squash bugs I have seen in all my years farming. No idea why but oh so thankful. We do have numerous tarnished plant bugs doing lots of damage on lettuce, chard, etc. more than in many years. Pyganic and netting helps. Record numbers of tomato hornworms, also unusual. Pill bugs were an issue on many crops in early summer, but Sluggo application likely helped. Now it's Japanese beetles!

Peas on Hortinova did great in the tunnels; the snow peas were a trial and were light colored (maybe better variety to find) but prolific. Pole beans on twine in the tunnels started producing in June and we prefer them a lot over bush types. Not sure how long each planting will produce but the Seychelles are our favorite as darker green. Northeaster is also good as a Romano.

Tomatoes on basket weave system in the tunnel have already grown over 10 feet! All varieties are producing and we try to do weekly fertilizing. Cukes and squash are pumping out like crazy and we picked our first eggplants 3-4 weeks ago but the heat has affected blossom production. Some wilting of summer squash, likely bacterial wilt, but not much in the second planting.

Celery in the tunnel is a huge profit maker. This is the first year it's had an issue. They are all going down with a virus, probably Aster Yellows and many are bolting. Planted a new bed this week and hope they stay healthy. Picking first peppers this week. Overwintered onions were amazing. Planted on plastic in low tunnel, kept fully weeded and size is great with little bolting. Forum is still our favorite. Scallions from oversized sets were productive every week all spring until recently.

Having good help this year has made it easier to get everything planted and weeded mostly on time but we still work long hours (too long). Sales for us are online and doing well, with a few wholesale accounts for surplus. Administrative time on the computer is too high but it works.

FARM FIRST OFFERS FREE SUPPORT TO FARMERS

Farm First is a free, Vermont-based program providing farmers and their families with support, resources and information to reduce stress. We can help connect you to resources, including technical, legal or financial assistance, as well as to a counselor or trained peer. You don't have to be alone with your challenges. We're good listeners and can help you address the challenges you face. We're here to help. <https://www.farmfirst.org/get-our-help> or for 24/7 counseling support call (877) 493-6216. Questions? Eva Griffen at evag@farmfirst

POLLINATOR SUPPORT REPORT

Laura Johnson, UVM Extension

Reports of insect pollinators on cover crops come from New Leaf Organics, Footprint Farm, The Farm Upstream, Philo Ridge Farm, Shelburne Farms, Common Roots farm, UVM Catamount Farm, Burnt Rock Farm, Bone Mountain Farm, and the Vermont Youth Conservation Corps Farm. These farms are trialing cover crop plantings for pollinator support and soil health as part of a UVM Extension grant from the Northeast Risk Management Education Program.

Average counts of insects observed foraging on flowers in 10 minutes were: Field peas and oats: 1 honey bee, 1 other bee or wasp, 3 flies, 1 moth or butterfly, and 1 beetle. Buckwheat: 6 honey bees, 5 bumble bees, 7 other bees or wasps, 17 flies, 3 moths or butterflies, and 6 beetles. Farmer quotes: "There were tons of insects noted; crazy amounts compared to week prior on buckwheat" and "Lots of activity on peas-oats (adjacent to flowering milkweed). Mostly hoverflies."

UPDATES FROM UVM EXTENSION AG ENGINEERING

Andy Chamberlin, UVM Extension

A new post-harvest case study features a DIY conversion of a shipping container for a wash pack space. Explore this project with a 360 tour, video interview and photos of special features in our latest blog post at <https://go.uvm.edu/asctuneyharvest>. Lauren Mucha and Oliver Owen own and operate Ascutney Harvest in Ascutney, Vermont. Their half-acre market garden consists mostly of mixed vegetables and herbs which require washing and packing before heading off to two different farmers markets and a few wholesale vendors. They are fairly new to this land and needed a quick and affordable improvement to their wash/pack area.

TAKE THE TICK SURVEY, VISIT THE TICK INFO CENTER

Ticks and tickborne diseases are increasing in Vermont. Scientists at the UVM Entomology Research Laboratory are gathering information about ticks on farms (of all types) and farmers deal with them. Insights gained will help develop resources and strategies to minimize risk of tick bites. Please complete this 5-10 minute survey:

https://qualtrics.uvm.edu/jfe/form/SV_00nshllEvEdmldc. Visit the UVM Tick Information Center <https://site.uvm.edu/vt-tic/> for more information. Questions? Cheryl Sullivan at cfrank@uvm.edu

UPCOMING EVENTS

Complete listing with event details is at <https://go.uvm.edu/2024farmworkshops>