



Vermont Vegetable and Berry News – August 3, 2020
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www.uvm.edu/vtvegandberry

2020 VERMONT VEGETABLE AND BERRY GROWER WEBINARS

Wednesdays from noon to 1:00 p.m. For details see:

<http://www.uvm.edu/vtvegandberry/Webinars2020.html>

July 29. Spotted Wing Drosophila Management. Vern Grubinger. (recording posted)
August 5. Update on Insects and Diseases. Ann Hazelrigg and Margaret Skinner.
August 12. High Tunnel Tomato Management. Becky Maden and Cheryl Frank Sullivan.
August 19. Tour of Wash/Pack Facility Projects. Chris Callahan and Andy Chamberlain.
August 26. Fall Cover Crop Options. Becky Maden and Laura Johnson.
Coming in September...Growing Saffron. Leafy Greens in Winter Tunnels. Irrigation Tips.

REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

(Guildhall) After precipitation-less May and June, thankfully it's been raining in July. Potatoes have been stunted by the dry and by the leafhoppers, but are pulling out of it now. We have been spraying for leafhopper, CPB, early blight and started mixing kelp into the tanks, with apparent benefits. Pumpkins and winter squash are looking well; pumpkins particularly seem to have a very good fruit set. Sorghum/Sudan seeded mid-July germinated well, but seems to be off to a slow start since.

(Westminster) Still quite dry here in southern Vermont and, between that and a few intermittent downpours, it's been a struggle to get beets and carrots to germinate. A hard rain crusts the soil and makes it difficult for the seedlings to push through.

On the other hand, we've had few insect or disease problems this year, so far. One exception is our early broccoli variety, Emerald Crown, which tends to get head rot when it does get wet. Our sweet corn crop has been very good and the blueberries are finally coasting to an end. Sales have picked up from earlier in the year and we're selling plenty of lettuce, kale, and chard, and starting to harvest beets and carrots. The downside to that is our weed control is suffering – just not enough time to both weed and harvest.

Our Jamaican H-2A workers will have just held their annual Jamaican Independence Day celebration, and we're planning on a very small, low-key affair this year.

(Shaftsbury) It has been an amazing year for business, but man the critter count is unreal: Crows eating melons and corn, coyotes eating corn and an occasional melon too, groundhogs eat everything leafy... and this is with 8-foot deer fence. Luckily, the bear inside the fence was just eating the mowed corn we had already picked.

On the bug front we had cranberry fruit worm in blueberries and lost 75% of crop. Laura McDermott from Cornell is working with us on a monitoring/organic spray program for next spring. We have squash vine borer for the first time, and all the leafhoppers, flea beetles etc. Still, we are harvesting some nice crops. Our field tomatoes have been in for 2 weeks. Sweet corn is... sweet. Melons coming in. Fall brassicas look good. The spring and early summer ones were kind of a bust. Nicest garlic crop we have had in long time. We grew it on bare ground for the first time and used straw for mulch and will definitely do that again. Feel extremely grateful to be farming in Vermont.

(Rochester) The wash station tent we have set up in front of the farm store might be the best thing we have done this PYO season. It signals we are serious about safety and sets a tone of respect for the farm and for others. Even people just coming in to buy a pint of blueberries wash their hands before they approach the shop window. Eating berries while picking has ceased and how we love that. Children are not running around unsupervised. Expressions of gratitude for making picking available have increased greatly. People are craving getting outside, being in a safe place, and gathering healthy food. And the hot, dry weather and continual irrigation has contributed to us having a wonderful blueberry crop, with conditions like California. Insect pressure is low. Weeds have slowed down. We have a bountiful crop, plenty of pickers, and happy customers. Somebody pinch me!

(Richmond) Our PYO blueberry farm has been quite busy this year, even on the weekdays. This has been a relief since we were unable to have our typical Music Night events and has helped us stay on top of the picking. We actually caught SWD in our traps a little later this year, by about a week, maybe due to the hot temperatures this July. Numbers were low to start and bushes were staying very well picked so we took a gamble and didn't apply our first spray until last Sunday. Looks to still be manageable thus far...

Curbside pick-ups for orders of 6 quarts of picked blueberries have been popular. Customers have been doing a great job following our Covid guidelines and seem happy to enjoy a socially distanced outdoor family activity. It does look like our season will be on the shorter side, likely due to the hot July temps which have been ripening the berries fairly quickly. Overall it's been a great few weeks for our season.

(Orwell) We are dry dry dry here, clay cracking with deep fissures in the earth. Hard to grow field vegetables or good pasture with the little bit of water from our well. Ready to get a big gulp of rain from the hurricane tomorrow!

The heat also means navigating the tunnel crops differently, trying to keep things cool and irrigated. We've lost some fruit sets on tomatoes and peppers due to the heat, which has meant some peaks and dips in production. Also trying to mitigate sun burn on the fruit by maintaining a little bit of foliage.

We are trying the Qlipr system in one tomato tunnel, liking it but learning that the metal rods can be a little rough on the plants and fruit. We installed them after the plants were established and now see some signs of abrasion along early fruits and stems. But compared to our other houses, where we try to lower and lean plants by climbing up on ladders and releasing the roller hooks, it is a very elegant system. The roller hooks can release too quickly and we tend to lose some fruit and crimp some stems. I think we will really love the Qlipr when it comes to plant removal time--no pulling off plastic clips!

Knocked back the hornworms last week after hand squishing loads of them. Then found one that almost looked like a parasitized hornworm--but is really a Cecropia moth caterpillar! So glad we didn't stomp on it out of habit. We fed it in a jar overnight and now it is spinning a cocoon.

(W. Rutland) Garlic all in, probably the best crop ever and drying rather quickly. Good hauls on cabbage and red onions as well. Currently hauling water for fall raspberries and peppers. Very little pressure from critters.

(Huntington) Our weather forecasts have never been so inaccurate when forecasting rain. Most years, a 40% chance of 1/4" rain means we get 3/4". This year, 80% chance of T-storms leaves us dry 4 out of 5 times. Despite how hot and dry it's been, we've been relatively fortunate to get ~3" of rain each of the last months, though we've irrigated easily 2x-3x as much as ever before, especially during the second half of June when potatoes were initiating tubers. We bought another, bigger irrigation pump this past winter and I'm feeling very smart for that. Usually a purchase like that guarantees a monsoon.

Leafhoppers were/are terrible (and early) this year, and with OMRI-listed materials not being terribly effective our early red potatoes are going down a week earlier than I'd like to see. Most other varieties are doing pretty well but I don't think we'll be winning any yield contests. Our sweet potatoes are looking great, as I assume everyone else's are as well in this Maryland summer we've been having. Same for winter squash.

Early yellow onions on plastic are showing some basal rot (looks like Fusarium?) which I've never seen before, though I've also never grown onions on black plastic with this many days in the upper 80's and 90's. We've been able to walk the field and rogue out affected plants since there is usually a diagnostic dead leaf on an otherwise healthy plant, and luckily it's not very prevalent (so far) in our larger planting of storage varieties. We still use black plastic despite the NY/PA research showing savings on bacterial diseases with silver mulch, since cold May soils is a more consistent risk factor for us than June and July heatwaves.

(Westminster West) Extremely dry here, received 3" since May. Droopy winter squash, thought it might be bacterial wilt. Running drips all the time to try to get the fields moderately moist. Wondering what's up with my tomatoes, looks like many flowers seemed burnt and later sets look very light on fruit. might be a new rootstock we used for grafts this year, hope to get a confirmation this week.

Winter squash looks good with no insect damage or signs of squash bugs at this time. Delicata look terrific, big and maturing fast. Onions are almost all, ready with Wallas almost sold out and Cabernet reds looking good as well. Garlic all in and dries, sales are strong! Potatoes looking real nice! Raspberries in the tunnels were real slow due to under-watering, but starting to catch up now, trying to stay ahead of SWD and releasing beneficials for spider mites. Cover crops coming up fast in this weather. Overall sales are steady.

(Plainfield NH) Strawberry season was best in several years, the mild winter contributed to the spring emergence of plants with little stress of winter injury, production was good and markets were strong. However, the only serious rain event thus far dumped 4" in 36 hours on the crop, which put a damper on the tail end of the production. Declining raspberry production has pointed out the need for replacement, as we realized that our plantings are over 20 years old. Subtle decreases in annual production get by us, but this year with the winter injury we can no longer ignore it. Blueberries in full swing and we are getting crop picked and moved as fast as we can with the crew working 12-hour days. So far no serious economic impact from SWD or Blueberry maggot although we know they are around. Knock on wood.

Harvest of vegetables is in full swing, and due to judicious application of fungicides (and low disease pressure from the drought) potato, onion, tomato and cucurbit foliage is holding up well, although a couple of melon varieties suffered some sort of collapse. Hoping for some drought relief this week to bring fall plantings and seeding along. Could easily sell a bunch of 6" inch ornamental material if I had any, but the cupboard is barren. Farmstand numbers are up (due to the pandemic) and although we served papers on a customer we didn't want around anymore, the majority of our customers are being good sports and compliant with our pandemic protocols.

(Argyle NY) It's been a challenging summer with lots of irrigation, extreme heat, new marketing procedures, lack of help, and now some disease issues, but we just keep pushing on like most farmers! Markets continue to be steady as well as our on-line system and home deliveries, with more partner businesses added each week to the mix. Baked goods, soaps, etc. as we plan for uncharted waters this winter. The only thing assured is the home deliveries. Overall, sales are beyond expectations, with no history to know how long it will last or how this will end up, but we will ride it.

Tomatoes are finally kicking in, as well as all the other summer bounty. Overwintered onions were late and summer onions are early, go figure. Flea beetles are our biggest issue along with the struggle of weeds growing so fast. Our arugula is going from seed to cutting in 2 weeks! Home gardening cut into our sales of lettuce in the early summer but now is picking up as the heat is so challenging.

TECH TIPS FROM THE UVM EXTENSION AG ENGINEERING TEAM

Washing Machine Greens Spinner: Cleaning Tips.

This blog post highlights some tips to cleaning your greens spinner and provides links to six videos that focus on how to best clean these machines. <http://go.uvm.edu/cleaningtips>

Improving Handwashing Stations.

This guide was motivated by a desire to improve current handwashing station practice with a focus on minimizing or even removing all contact between the user's hands and surfaces of the station. <http://go.uvm.edu/handwashingstation>

Spray Tables for Produce Farms.

Here are some options for spray table materials and approaches that should help make yours easier to clean and more durable. <http://go.uvm.edu/spraytables>

Drains for Produce Farms.

This guide provides background on planning for drains and drainage from produce wash and pack areas. Direct drains, floor and spot drains, and trench and gutter drains are discussed. A construction drawing for a trench drain is also provided. <http://go.uvm.edu/drains>

USDA CORONAVIRUS PROGRAM FOR SPECIALITY CROP GROWERS

The Coronavirus Food Assistance Program provides direct relief to producers who faced price declines and additional marketing costs due to COVID-19. Good news for vegetable and berry growers: recent changes were made by USDA to include a payment rate for crops stored and not sold, rotted in storage because they were unsold, or undelivered. With these changes, USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) has been able to support specialty growers, with one Vermont producer receiving a \$24,000 payment.

Producers individually do not need to demonstrate a market loss as USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) has determined the crop was affected nationally, therefore allowing producers across the nation to apply. Specialty crop producers, especially those with fall 2019 crops (apples, potatoes, squash, carrots) or who grow greens, herbs, or other produce indoors should contact their local FSA office to apply. See: [Farmers.gov/cfap](https://farmers.gov/cfap) for more information, including this fact sheet: <https://www.farmers.gov/sites/default/files/documents/CFAP-SpecialtyCrops-FactSheet-English-07202020.pdf>

Also on [Farmers.gov/cfap](https://farmers.gov/cfap) is a list of Frequently Asked Questions, and commodity-specific CFAP webinars covering program basics and what producers should know to enroll in the program. See the "CFAP Resources" and the "Videos and Webinars" tab.

If you aren't sure if you are eligible, contact your local FSA office, their contact information for VT is here: <https://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app?state=vt&agency=fsa>