



University of Vermont

Extension

College of Agriculture and Life Sciences

Vermont Vegetable and Berry Grower News – August 4, 2025

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

REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

(Westminster) The season is going fairly well, despite the wet, cool weather early on that's kept the early-planted crops about a week late. We got quite dry through July; we'd get a couple of one-inch rains at one farm but none down the road. But that last good rain leveled everything out so, rainwise, we're in good shape, especially with cooler weather. And we've had no real insect or disease problems.

Birds are another matter. We've been picking a lot of sweet corn, keeping just ahead of the birds. We've had the worst damage I've ever seen – whole flocks of them chewing the ears down to the nub.

We're just starting to harvest carrots. A little worried about our storage cabbage – it's maturing very fast, and we don't want to have to put it into storage too early.

Our blueberry season has been excellent; that's just starting to wind down. Strawberries were good, too, until the last week of rain and heat.

I was very sad at the passing of a good friend, colleague, and early organic grower, Bruce Kaufman of Riverside Farm in East Hardwick, who died in July. We had many enjoyable years, farming and as members of Deep Root Organic Co-op.

(Underhill) Sweet corn is about 2 weeks behind as the first patch didn't come up and the second is terribly uneven. Middle and late season plantings all look great, so we'll have corn once it's here.

Strawberry experiment (bare root planted mid May in bio-plastic) has a ton of runners. Was hoping they'd self-set into a hybrid plastic/matted row system but the plastic is holding up too well in this case. Likely looking for plugs, as 1,000 plants is nowhere near enough for our retail markets and don't want to upset our customer base.

Pumpkins are all looking great so far, hoping to start a fungicide schedule this week as historically plants go down hill quickly in August and we're trying to up our quality this year.

Hay yields are up after fertilizing last year, with lots of early season rain. Finally a nice stretch of weather to get a lot in!

(Guildhall) Pretty good growing season so far up here. Hasn't rained in a week, and none forecasted for the coming week, but there's always something to complain about.

Pumpkins are on track to have their best year in 4, but what a difference between treated seed and untreated with cool temps in late May.

Potatoes look great generally but it's been a challenging bug & weed year. Everything is within tolerances, but a few fields will need a second round of pesticide, which is unusual for us. Typically we spray second generation cpb, then again 10 days later to get the bugs that were underground. I may have missed a generation early, who knows, but we're spraying again, and since it's a different generation rotating chemicals. First round was Beseige, second will be Movento.

Because of the lack of rain I anticipate some tubers will abort, so lower yields overall, but a larger size profile. Poor seed also led to some varieties germinating at 16" in-row even though planted at 8", so that'll make chefs too. It's all good, last 2 years we were down 25 - 33% of the crop due to flooding so this year is a breeze knock on wood.

Wish we had crew enough to hand weed, but we're really feeling the staff crunch. It's just 3 of us, but with our division of labor being 1 guy in the barn, 1 in the shop, 1 in the field this time of year we're tapped out. Putting up a new roadside stand too, just cuz we need something bigger & insulated.

Fresh harvesting starts this week, and per usual I'm stressed about new potato shelf life. Thankfully our fresh market customers take the spuds unwashed (do-able cuz our sandy soil) so fingers crossed.

(Wallingford) The blueberry crop was 50% less than last year due to deer damage eating fruit buds all winter then running through field with fruit set, breaking branches off. Hail storm on July 3 marked and knocked off fruit. Once I set up bird netting the deer kept blowing through the side walls and letting birds in. PYO has been great keeping fruit picked and we are currently picked out. Only had to spray for SWD once. Installing 8 foot deer fence this fall.

(Grand Isle) We have closed blueberry picking for the season. Our crop was down a little compared to the last two years. Noticed we had more u-pick customers this year.

(Westminster West) Mid-summer peak here. Tomatoes from the tunnels doing well with no problems, moving strong amounts of celery from tunnels while the field celery has evolving issues which I sorta expected but ran out of room available in the tunnels but the final planting of celery is going in a tunnel today. We cut the entire head at harvest, just takes too long for harvesting stalks for us.

Tunnel raspberries doing better than it has in years due to extensive thinning of canes! Tunnel garlic which was an experiment did amazing this year and will do much more this fall. Tried a new variety (for me) of garlic: Carpathian, a true recombole variety and it did great, replanting most of it for seed production for next year and will offer it for sale. The German white that we grow had a great year this year and the entire seed crop is already spoken for except what we hold back for black garlic production.

Sweet onions (Expectations) did tremendously this year, zero onion thrips, no spraying at all, grown on white plastic along with leeks, both did great! Winter squash, our biggest crop, looks good, but potatoes not so much. Cover crops finally looking good, we have not had much rain since may here, about 2" total in 8 weeks.

I had a chance to test drive the new super E battery tractor from Tilmore a few weeks ago; loved it and hope to have one for spring delivery!

(Wilmot, NH) Seems like the frenzy of spring and early summer is finally ending and somewhat relaxing into the pattern of harvest and sell. Sorry to anyone suffering from not enough water, but enjoying the lack of disease, weeds, and easy drying out of onions and garlic. Will definitely need to irrigate cover crops.

Lots of sunny days means more traffic at the farmstand, and the strong sales are beginning to close the gap over last year from too much rain and low farmstand traffic early on. Farmers market has been strong throughout from lucky mild weather every Saturday morning.

First planting of tomatoes were not very good due to the bad spring conditions but the second planting is beginning to make up for that.

The last two Ledge wood high tunnels were delivered this week and beginning to think about ordering supplies for fall/winter projects as well as other investments, like installing more heaters in high tunnels and upgrading electric system.

(Plainfield NH) Drought has come back like an unwanted and unexpected guest. After the miserably wet and cold spring we have once again found ourselves dry as dust. (Shades of the summer of '23) Fortunately Ray has committed to using a lot of drip and that has paid dividends. Despite using biodegradable plastic it feels a little "dirty" to land fill yet another truck load of ag plastic, in this case drip tape. It is certainly a more efficient use of water than with over head irrigation, although we still utilize the travelers and solid set.

The strawberry year was a bust, and talking with other growers we have a lot of theories, but there is no consensus as to any one factor. Cold soils in the spring? Soil saturation and leaching? Whatever worked against the strawberries must have worked well for the blueberries because we are harvesting our biggest and best crop ever and I am loath to explain why. The black caps and the red raspberries have performed well, but I am sure the addition of drip irrigation has helped.

No major SWD intrusion, although we have been keeping them at bay by spraying as we know they showed up at the end of the strawberry harvest. FYI, we gave up growing the variety Malwina because we kept getting caught with SWD intervention. No late varieties past Valley Sunset for us.

Solanaceous crops look good and we are getting plum cherry tomatoes out of the field. All our heirlooms and beefsteak tomatoes are grown in high tunnels and a couple heated greenhouses. The variety Envol potatoes are A-size and very clean. Hopeful for a good yield of all varieties, and tops look pretty good at the moment. A good crop of winter squash is setting, and a decent crop of garlic drying in the greenhouse. Initiating strawberry renovation.

We are hoping to get a couple more H2A arrivals this week as we are harvesting just about everything on the farm.

Biggest pest problem at the moment is deer, and we have invested heavily in electric fencing and keeping our fingers crossed. Trying to get some deer permits to relieve the pressure.

Sales continue strong and consumer demand for local is keeping all the area farmers afloat.

TESTING FOR GARLIC BLOAT NEMATODE

Before you replant, and especially if you sell garlic seed, it is a good idea to have it tested for [garlic bloat nematode](#). This pest may occur along with [Fusarium basal rot](#), or not, but you can't tell with the naked eye. For many years we have used the University of Arkansas [Nematode Diagnostic Laboratory](#) for this specialized service; the cost is just \$30 for out of state samples and they are fast. Here is the [submission form](#), select "custom assay" and mail with at least 4 bulbs. You must print out and include page 1 of their [APHIS permit](#).

TISSUE TESTING FOR BERRY CROPS

If you grow blueberries, raspberries or strawberries, [leaf analysis](#) aka tissue testing provides data that can help you optimize future fertilizer applications. To promote wider adoption of this practice, or perhaps just remind you to take samples, UVM Extension will cover the cost of one test per VVBGA member farm done at the Penn State [Ag Analytical Services Lab](#). You can add more samples and pay \$24 each. Here is the [submission form](#) to complete, do the best you can with the management questions, they are not essential. Note on the form to charge the test to my account. (If not yet a member, join the [VVBGA](#) by creating a farm account for \$75, and feel free to select half-price since it is August, or join for free if that's what you can afford.)

Collect recently mature, fully expanded, healthy leaves. Blueberries should be sampled during early harvest, or soon after. June-bearing strawberries are sampled after renovation, first fully mature leaves. Summer-fruited raspberries are sampled from non-fruited canes that will fruit next year. Collect at least 40 leaves for blueberries, strawberries or 60 leaves for brambles, from plants throughout the field, avoiding areas with atypical growth (i.e. not unusually good or bad).

If you have a problem area, you may want to sample that separately for comparison. Ideally leaves are from the same variety, but in small plantings, sampling several varieties at the same stage of maturity is reasonable i.e still informative. Remove the petioles, place leaves in a paper bag / envelope (good idea to label it) and mail to the address on the form.

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES AND UPDATES

[Marketing Assistance for Specialty Crops](#) (MASC) update. Wondering why you got a MASC payment from USDA-FSA recently? A second payment was issued to growers who applied and were approved for MASC funding in January 2025. Link to the April USDA press release.

Interested in applying for [Natural Resource Conservation Service \(NRCS\)](#) programs for 2026 (CSP, EQIP, AMA, RCPP)? August 22, 2025 is the Vermont deadline to complete the Conservation Program Application and return it to your local USDA service center (Vermont offices and Nationwide service center locator). Submitting this application does not commit you to participating, it just indicates your interest in exploring which NRCS programs are right for you. In 2026 EQIP funding is available to Vermont growers via local fund pools dedicated to different resource priorities. Contact your conservation district for more information.

Want UVM Extension help with funding opportunities for your farm? Contact Rachel Stievater at rachel.stievater@uvm.edu (NRCS questions) or Julie Callahan at julie.callahan@uvm.edu (general funding questions).

SOIL HEALTH AND SCALING UP FOR WHOLESALE

Clearfield Farm, 250 Genes Road, Granville VT 05747

TOMORROW Tuesday August 5, 4:00-6:30 pm

Cost: Free. *No registration required, just show up!* Park in the field across the street from the barnyard and high tunnels. Look for UVM Extension sign, and farm equipment lined up.

Clearfield Farm is owned and operated by Melissa Kosmaczewski and John Hirsch. They grow certified organic fingerling and specialty potatoes, carrots, winter squash, grains and herbs for wholesale markets on 50 acres of cropland.

- The owners will describe their equipment and partnerships that make it possible to access wholesale markets.
- We'll tour the fields to discuss the farm's focus on soil health using cover crops, plant-based amendments and crop rotations (Becky Maden, UVM Extension)
- NRCS folks will answer questions about funding utilized at Clearfield such as soil testing and Conservation Stewardship Program (Jenna Grauer-Gray and Sarah Jansen, NRCS)
- Check out the combine and root harvester funded by Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets grant programs (Sarah McIlvennie and Sonia Howlett, VAAFM)
- Discuss techniques for Colorado potato beetle control (Becky, UVM Extension)
- View the pack shed changes needed to shift from retail to wholesale markets.

This event is supported by the [Transition to Organic Partnership Program](#).

TICK SAFETY ON AND OFF THE FARM

Free online webinar: Wednesday August 20, 6:00 - 7:00pm. Those that live, work and recreate near tick habitats are at high risk for bites and contracting a tick-borne disease. Farmers, livestock and pets are prime targets! This FREE, online session will cover tick ID, their life cycles, the disease-causing pathogens they carry, bite prevention tips, survey results and more. Register using [this link](#); then a Zoom link will be emailed after you register. Questions? Cheryl Sullivan, Assistant Research Professor, UVM CALS, cfrank@uvm.edu or (802) 656-5434.

FAREWELL BRUCE KAUFMAN

Our thriving community of vegetable growers owes a lot to pioneers like Bruce, who learned, and shared, how to grow and market wholesale organic crops. Bruce and his wife Judy Jarvis established Riverside Farm in East Hardwick about 30 years ago, and helped found [Deep Root Organic Co-op](#) in 1985, which today has 20 member farms that grow wholesale vegetable in Vermont and Quebec. Bruce was an innovative farmer and a generous person who helped fellow farmers, donated lots of food, and served others in many ways as described at the memorial celebration of his life. I was told that Bruce brought the first water wheel transplanter to the Northeast back in 1980 or so! He was using an “industrial” soil block maker probably 30 years ago. And he was key to getting the Deep Root Co-op facility built and owned by its members. So thank you Bruce for these many other contributions. The Co-op has established a fund in Bruce’s name to support new member farms; if you’d like to contribute please contact the office at sales@deeprootorganic.coop