



VERMONT VEGETABLE AND BERRY GROWER NEWS – September 1, 2021

Compiled by Vern Grubinger, University of Vermont Extension

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

(802) 257-7967 ext. 303, vernon.grubinger@uvm.edu

REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

(Guildhall) We're digging new potatoes from yellows, chippers, reds, blues and getting chefs from all of them. Size is so good, so early this year that for the first time in 3 years we could supply baked potatoes for our town's annual library fundraiser, a point of some pride. Potato foliage is beginning to show its age, maybe some early blight but is generally in good shape.

Pumpkins went in 2 weeks earlier than last year and will be 2 weeks later. Decent fruit size, but almost nothing is blushing orange yet. Sunshine kabocha and Delicata will make squash but everything else is very on the fence. Construction goes well enough. Rafters on the barn addition are up. Plowed a few acres of hay ahead of 2023 potatoes. Follow the doings on Instagram @sparrowarcfarm

(Burlington) Starting to be able to see the late season storage crops outcomes. Onion crop is off the charts. Was it extra irrigation, thrips control, and better June growth? A decrease from 4 rows to 3? Improved weed control? Regardless, yields are way over normal, despite a significant downy mildew outbreak in later July. Winter squash looking better than 2020, when July pollination suffered in the blistering heat. Potatoes also off to a good start. I'm hoping for another drier autumn because I love how it reduces foliar diseases in brassicas and roots.

Enjoyed our pollinator workshop with new UVM Extension Pollinator Specialist Laura Johnson, picked up useful info. Turns out many of the ground nesting bees have short life cycles of 2 to 4 weeks and tunnel below the plow layer for their solitary nests. This means bare soil in the middle of our vegetables for a modest amount of time can serve as decent habitat, if other things are equal, which makes our bare wheel tracks between plastic seem like a good idea in our cucurbits.

Thinking a lot about Jon Satz this week, his family, and his contribution to the veg and berry community. He was a bright light and always willing to share. I will miss him.

(Westminster West) Full-on harvest season and the weather is finally cooperating as well! Winter squash yields seem below normal, not surprised with so many cloudy days and rains. Pumpkins are not as grand as last year although pie pumpkins look excellent. Tomato crop winding down, lost several fruit sets back when it was very hot so a huge gap, picked out for the first time in years.

Potatoes love all the rain; yields look great, good size and quality. Two new varieties, Baltic Rose and Peter Wilcox have huge yields and excellent color. CPB had little presence here. I did see them, sprayed only once and the timing must have been perfect. Great year for the allium family, huge yields and top quality including the Leeks, which have no purple blotch this year and no idea why! Some years you can do all the right things and still have problems and then the rare year when you do nothing and you get perfect crops, life is a mystery. Be well.

(Rochester) We got four good weeks of blueberry picking in this season but lost the last of the crop mid-August. Yield was about two-thirds of last year's, although last year was particularly good. The wet conditions caused the fruit to swell up early and we started to see drops in just the second week of harvest. SWD likes it wet and was much harder for us to control, and pickers don't come out when it's raining. But the fall raspberry crop looks promising, and we are hoping for a not-too-early killing frost this fall.

(S. Royalton) This has been my toughest year ever, zukes died in 3 days, melons/cukes doing terribly, greens burning up. At least the corn, tomatoes, and beans are doing well.

(Westminster) We've been harvesting some of our root crops – carrots, beets, and watermelon radishes – and they look nice. That's good because the drenching we got in July brought in a lot of disease. Heavy flooding on July 30 damaged crops in some low-lying fields (although Henri, fortunately, was a bust, disaster-wise). Saturated, anaerobic soils are breeding grounds for fungus spores. The broccoli has been a disaster, and our lacinata and red kale were hit hard. Lettuce fared poorly, too. But new plantings of kale are looking better now that the weather has evened out, and we're hoping for a good root-crop season.

We'll start picking winter squash soon, although wet weather did not help that either. In addition to disease, rain leached nutrients out of the soil and that will affect yields. Thin-skinned specialty squashes like kabocha will be scarce, although our butternut and acorn should do well.

Like many other farmers, our local work force shrinks this time of year, with students going back to school, so we're scrambling to harvest for orders and keep our fall crops weeded. We'll start up our new wash/pack line soon, which will make packing out root crops much more efficient and help us do a better job of meeting food safety standards.

(Elmore) Hot and dry. Plum and pear trees wilting, ripening at least three weeks early. Our water system timers can't take it and conk out every few weeks, we keep buying new ones. We inspect all potted trees weekly for signs of drying out, usually due to failed timers.

Heavy crops of blackberries, apples with nearly no insect damage, pears and plums bending their branches. Many weeds I have never seen before taking over parts of the farm, some of these seem to be attracting pollinators, so I will probably leave them. Lots of monarchs and bees on wild purple asters. We mow less and leave larger areas unmowed for birds and bees. NRCS visited today and said we are doing a great job on habitat creation.

(Westfield) We are still very dry. We finally got one inch of rain, which gives us some relief. We were lucky to be able to do some irrigation over the summer to keep the plants growing and amazingly, we have a good crops. All vegetables did well, which is hard to understand when the soil is like wood ash. Sales have been strong. Tomatoes grafted on Shin cheong were a no show. Last year I tried a tomato leaf tea against the swede midge; I fill a 5-Gal bucket full of tomatoes leaves and add water and let it stand for two weeks, then filter and spray weekly (almost) on broccoli, cauliflowers, and cabbage, non-diluted. I lost only 30 % of my broccoli and there is barely any damage on the other crops. Previously, I used to lose all my broccoli. Two years in I don't know if it is a coincidence, or if it works, but I do harvest nice broccoli now. Will see if it keeps working every year. Warning: it smells awful!

(Cabot) The crops are loving the heat and humidity! The workers will be happy to see it go though! Everything is lush and prolific except just yellow squash was late coming in; not sure why? Was it the new field that had been in Christmas trees, or just a slow year for yellow squash?

Blueberries are done now; SO many! Didn't notice any SWD problems although had heard of people nearby who found them in traps. Happy pickers and lots in the freezer too!

Winter squash are starting to ripen; has been easy to stave off any downy mildew with just regular scouting/treating as needed. Sweet corn delicious! Problem with corks at ends on approx. 50-60% of the 3 acres we planted. We're freezing a lot of that for corn chowder this winter. Thornless blackberries in a high tunnel are beautiful, yummy and plentiful.

(Newbury) Tons of monarchs. All over the Joe Pyeweed and sedums in our gardens. Harvesting Carola and Nataschas. Very good size and yield. Same with onions.

(Plainfield NH) Fall harvest seasons mentally starts at Labor Day for us. Onion tops are finally at a point that we need to pull them and bring them into the greenhouse to finally dry, and we need to drag out the potato harvesting equipment so that its ready to go mid-September. We lost our fall hard squash and pumpkin crop to weeds and deer. Still lots of daily harvest of all matter of melons (stunningly good flavor this year for some reason) tomatoes, fall raspberries. The rains of July blossomed into weed pressure of epic proportions that we are trying to battle in our new strawberry beds. Never seems to be enough hours or enough bodies. Sales remain strong, although wholesale is not as epic as last year.

(Salisbury NH) Radishes were unpredictable this season. Some like Rover grew lots of tops and hardly any bottom (overly fertile soil?) Celesta just sat there. I tried Pink Beauty and Cherry Belle. All terrible, just didn't make a nice round radish, some seemed like throw backs to some ancient root crop! Peppers did well but eggplants, right next to peppers, were stunted. The Asian variety were not long and skinny, mostly curved and fat. Arugula was perfect - no flea beetle damage once I planted and covered with ProTekNet. Wonderful stuff but a pain to uncover and harvest and cover again. (I wanted more than one harvest).

Erratic weather has been hard on many crops. Hot and humid then cold and rainy. Drought for all of June then swamps for July. Trying to do more no-till. Works great for some things but my experiment with buckwheat and straw around cucumbers and melons produced lots of buckwheat and very small plants with tiny fruits. Cutting broccoli off at the soil line and transplanting lettuce worked great. Beets were another strange crop. The hoophouse Early Wonder was beautiful - both tops and roots. The same variety outside sat there with wilted tops and small beets. Partly because we put shade cloth on in June and should have taken it off in July. By the time we thought about it we were almost done with the rainy July, but beets didn't recover.

Carrots improved once we took off shade cloth. Mostly Romance. Later plantings ended up with bigger carrots than the earlier plantings (assume it was the shade cloth issue). Cherry tomatoes were not productive. We grow (non-grafted) Sungold and Jasper which usually produce so much we throw away some. We cut back this year and now struggle to have enough. These are in a hoophouse so not exposed to weather but also have lots of splitting which we didn't have before.

We've had plenty of customers. No one complains about the prices. We do have a problem, though, with the various internet sites that claim to be us and post our hours. We are only opened Friday, Saturday, and Sunday but people drive up all hours of the day, saying "your website says you're open." I don't have time to correct all the misinformation out there. Looking forward to a little cooler, drier weather of September and October.

(Argyle NY) August has been a good month of normal temperatures and rainfall. Except for the onetime event that north of us got 5" of rain and our diesel pump went underwater! Oh well, makes it interesting. Our biggest challenge is the lack of labor that then cascades down to weedy spots on the farm, missed marketing opportunities and then to long of hours for us.

Onion crops looks great and other fall crops are looking good as we plan these fall harvests. Brassica crops are showing some problems with Alternaria as the weeks go on so that's only questionable crop. Cucumbers are basically down with multiple problems, but zucchini is looking good. Lots of moths in the brassicas keep the Dipel going but other than that very little spraying has happened this year. A first! Our online store has slowed for the summer, but we expect it to surge as people come back from vacationing and our winter tunnels provide the sought-after greens.

FAREWELL JON SATZ

Jon Satz, owner/operator of Woods Market Garden in Brandon for 22 years, passed away on August 25 after a long illness that he battled with grace. Jon was known for his skill as a grower and for the kindness and support he provided to others in the farming world. A visit with Jon always lifted one's spirits and usually resulted in learning something. He informally advised many growers across Vermont and the region, and he also hosted dozens of farm workshops, gave great presentations at winter meetings, and collaborated on many farm research projects.

He pioneered sweet corn transplanting, tested biomass heat for greenhouses, experimented with strip tillage, grew numerous cover crops, oilseed crops, and small grains over the years. He was a key player back in the day as growers figured out how organic strawberry production could be viable at commercial scale. Jon found the sweet spot of diversified greenhouse management that was high tech when needed but simple when that was sufficient.

Jon maintained a strong relationship with Bob and Sally Wood, from whom he purchased the farm, as well as with his Jamaican and local crew. He donated thousands of pounds of food to the food bank. He marketed collaboratively with other growers. We are a better community for having known Jon and he will be missed. Our hearts go to his wife Courtney, sons Emmet and Ezra, and their entire family.

Share your memories with his family and friends at: <https://www.caringbridge.org/visit/jonsatz>. To view a photo tribute to Jon's farming life, see: <https://go.uvm.edu/jonsatztribute>

UPDATES FROM THE UVM PLANT DIAGNOSTIC CLINIC

Ann Hazelrigg, UVM Extension plant pathologist

Fungal leaf spot diseases continue to spread with each rain event. The northern part of the state has been dry and hence lower incidence of disease, the middle part has had weekly rains and is seeing higher amounts of foliage disease and the south part of the state has been deluged!

Tomato leafspots on the rise (early blight and Septoria) on field tomatoes. Late blight still has only been found on potatoes in Ontario and Maine. Getting lots of reports of powdery mildew, botrytis, and leaf molds in tomato high tunnels. Ghost spot showing up on high tunnel fruit that high loads of Botrytis inoculum. Some growers mentioning a break in production because of the early high temps of over 85 F. Tomato fruit issues are showing up due to suspected K deficiency, high temps, and other abiotic ripening issues. <http://extension.msstate.edu/content/diseases-and-abiotic-problems-greenhouse-tomatoes>

Watch for Phytophthora fruit rot if your pumpkins or squash are maturing and your soils have been saturated for 24 hours. Till under sections of the field if you see the yeasty spores on the fruit to eliminate further airborne spread of inoculum. Avoid moving dirty equipment from an infected field to a clean one. <https://ag.umass.edu/vegetable/fact-sheets/phytophthora-blight>

Downy mildew seen on brassica (kale) seedlings. DMs are very host specific and like cool, cloudy wet conditions which become more prevalent in the fall so you may see the disease of several veg families. Cucurbit downy mildew reported throughout the region on cukes and cantaloupes although I have had no samples in the PDC.

Stemphylium leaf blight noted in onions in addition to bacterial diseases causing rot on inner scales of bulbs.

Send pics or questions to ann.hazelrigg@uvm.edu or samples to me at home 206 Walker Hill Rd, Williston, 05495 or to Jeffords Hall, UVM, Burlington, 05405. If you send to Jeffords, just email me to give me a heads-up as I am not in the lab every day.

NEW RESOURCES FROM UVM EXT AG ENGINEERING TEAM

Chris Callahan and Andy Chamberlin

We've been busy researching topics, collecting info, and pulling together new grower-focused educational resources in web, print, and video format.

* New on the VVBGA YouTube Channel: The Details on Growing Mustard for Weed Control with Charlie Gray of 4 Corners Farm <https://youtu.be/2z7SR3FRaww>

* Cleaning Tools – Andy has swept lot of bits and pieces into a dustpan of a resources focused on cleaning tools that work well for produce farms. Head to <http://go.uvm.edu/cleaningtools> to see the blog post, download a PDF version, or watch the video version.

* Concrete Repair – Chris has chipped away at best practices for repairing cracks and pits in concrete floors and cemented them all together in a set of resources to help you keep rolling along smoothly in the packshed and cooler. Visit <http://go.uvm.edu/concretereprair> for the blog post, PDF download, and video.

* Bins – Our bins resource is getting an update including some new bins that we have recently received samples of. Video and PDF versions of this resource will be uploaded shortly. Check out the updated versions at <http://go.uvm.edu/bins>.

* New Podcast Episodes: Andy continues to visit with growers and collect their experiences in the Ag Engineering Podcast (<https://agengpodcast.com/>). Recent episodes include:

* Growing from 1/4 to 3 Acres at Old Road Farm: EP53 - <https://agengpodcast.com/2021/08/30/growing-from-1-4-to-3-acres-at-old-road-farm-ep53/>

* Burying Stones with a Forigo: EP52 - <https://agengpodcast.com/2021/08/25/burying-stones-with-a-forigo/>

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Stitcher <https://www.stitcher.com/s?fid=490549&refid=stpr>
and Spotify <https://open.spotify.com/show/1uQp71QmIBZpUcGkwTArXh>

Seeking Winter Squash: We'll be doing a winter squash curing and storage trial this fall and are looking for 4 bushels each of 3 varieties and will pay retail for them. Email chris.callahan@uvm.edu, or call / text cell at 860-380-0448.

RETAIL SALES NEWS AND INFORMATION FROM FARM TO PLATE

Annie H. Harlow, VT Farm & Food Ambassador

Small Bites is a weekly e-news that supports the full spectrum of VT food businesses selling at and to retail stores. The aim is to increase sales from our food producers across all categories. We do this through highlighting local, national, and international variables. With a retail and distribution emphasis, Small Bites is useful for VVBGA members who sell direct to stores or have farm stands. Find out more by exploring the archive of past issues; click on “sign up” to get the newsletter: <https://www.vtfarmtoplate.com/get-connected/small-bites-newsletter-archive>
Questions or you want to be featured? Email smallbites802@gmail.com

SOIL HEALTH UPDATES

Becky Maden, UVM Extension vegetable nutrient management specialist

The VVBGA Soil Health web platform can help you organize and store your soil test and cover cropping records and help your farm comply with Vermont’s Required Agricultural Practices. Visit <https://vvbga.org/> and go to Soil Health. Becky Maden is available to help upload your data

Fall is an ideal time for soil sampling so you can head into next spring with a plan for amendments, cover crops, etc. Vegetable and annual berry production fields should be sampled at least every 3 years to guide best management practices for pH, nutrients, and organic matter. Samples can be sent to the UVM Agricultural and Environmental Testing Lab and cost \$15 each.

Cover crops play a vital role in reducing winter and spring erosion, “mopping” up excess nutrients, and suppressing weeds. Oats can be sown until September 15 and will winter kill, leaving ground easy to plant next spring. Towards the end of September, winter rye, wheat, or triticale are great options and will overwinter, gaining vigorous biomass next spring. For fields that will be planted to later summer crops next season, hairy vetch can be mixed with the grain to provide abundant nitrogen for summer crops (~80 lbs. rye, wheat, or triticale + 20 lbs. vetch per acre). Do whatever you can to get the soil covered up before winter—your crops and soil will thank you next year! For support with soil sampling or soil health planning, contact rebecca.maden@uvm.edu or 802.773.3349x277

TEST YOUR SEED GARLIC SEED FOR BLOAT NEMATODE

Before you sell seed to other growers or plant it), it’s advisable to send a sample to a diagnostic lab to screen for nematode infestation, to prevent [GBN](#) from spreading in the region. Do not delay, as test results may take a week or more to receive. A couple of affordable options for testing are the [Univ. of Arkansas](#) (\$30) and [Univ. of Maine](#) (\$50). The former tests samples for several species of nematodes, the latter tests only for GBN but also looks for Botrytis and White Rot infections. Send at least 5 bulbs per sample. Univ. Arkansas requires their [APHIS permit](#) be printed and included in the shipment.