



Vermont Vegetable and Berry News – September 13, 2016
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REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

(Burlington) Looking forward to some rain and cooler temperatures. So many of our 'fall' crops matured in August and early September that our CSA offerings are going to be less diverse in October than I like. Hard to get cover crops off to a good start; we have many acres waiting for that serious soaking rain before we even bother. We had one window of what appeared to be wet weather in mid-August and ended up with sluggish germination and growth that led to all of our late summer oat and oat-blend cover crops becoming overrun with weeds and subsequently terminated. I love cover crops but don't love seeding them twice. That said, warm weather crops have been great, peppers are a particularly notable success. Getting tunnels prepped and planted for winter, hoping that irrigating in hot weather won't lead to rampant *Alternaria* and black rot in our Brassicas, as has happened in other years.

(Plainfield) Bartlett Hill Berry farm had another stellar year; same production as 2015-over 400 gallons of blueberries. Summer raspberries, maybe 40 gallons or so; elderberries abundant. Spotted wing drosophila arrived after more than 90% of the blueberries were picked. Most of the pickers helped by mulching and weeding for lower price. The place looks great. I will do another work-day this fall, as a trade for berries next year. I don't know what I should do with the remaining bit of blueberries; less than 10 gallons but full of drosophila. Advice appreciated. Right now, the chipmunks, blue jays and cedar waxwings are on debris cleanup. I have been cutting out the witches broom, chlorinating open stems and clippers between cuts, then removing from property. So far, only one bush has had some witches broom reappear. Everything else has not had a return (four years clean on some plants). I ran a "sale" weekend, right after that intense heat spell in August, and 1/4 of my production got picked in three days. Season started early, July 13th instead of July 20th, and lasted until end of August. Some berries still out there. I put up the bear fence and loaded the freezer with bacon to drape over the fence if I turned it on at night, but never turned it on. All bear activity came before or after blueberry season with no damage to plants. I did ask guys to pee around the outside of fence to make lots of human smell.

Newbury) Romanesco broccoli is exploding. Tomatoes and peppers continue unabated. Eggplants are slowing down. Cannot keep up with the pole beans. Probably the best garden we have had and we do no watering.

(Elmore) Never seen it so hot and dry. Plums are large and sweet. Pears earlier than usual. Apples are juicy and abundant. Lots of elderberries and tasty crabapples. Have to be grateful for all we get in this dry hot year, still in the high 80s here in mid-September; unheard of, but we know it will be a lot cooler soon so we are bringing in the apples and pears for cider and checking the northern kiwis each day for ripeness. Diversity is good in fruits and nuts; a good year for some, a light year for others.

(Marshfield) Harvested less than half the ginger in the high tunnel this year than last year. Not sure if it was due to the weather. Only harvested a week earlier than last year. Everything else was the same as last year, when the harvest was 7.5 lb harvested to every 1 lb planted. This year closer to 3:1. On the bright side, high tunnel spinach was seeded last Wednesday and appeared to germinate fairly well, despite the heat last week. Direct seeded and kept it watered from overhead sprinkler at least twice a day through Saturday. On drip system now. Looking forward to a successful winter!

(Plainfield) Hard to argue with beautiful late summer weather. Winter squash is ready to cut two weeks ahead of the usual date. Greenhouse eggplant have run out of fruits to mature, time to pull the plants. Cherry tomatoes slowing down but still the harvest justifies the greenhouse space they occupy. That will change soon. Spotless Romas from the greenhouses selling well. Dipel, Solubor and kelp sprays keeping up leaf quality in kales. Reaching the end of my sweet corn. Never sprayed, never saw a worm. Enjoying the shorter days.

(Northfield) High tunnel tomatoes bounced back from duress. Our travel let them suffer from malnutrition and leaf mold was dramatically advancing on the skinny plants by 4th of July but fertigation, foliar feeding and backing off on pruning (a decision aimed at cutting our losses) has enabled us to have normal late season tomato yields after a grim early season. Machine spread second cut hay mulch continues to be effective in keeping brassicas almost weed free. We rent the mulcher and would love to share this type of equipment with a few farms instead. We are happy with coverage with a new round of oat and pea cover crop which grew back as hoped after mowing very mature oats and field peas prior to one of the few bits of rain in August. Weeds in areas not mulched or cover cropped are relentless and having lost talent back to school we are having trouble defending edges!

(East Charlotte) Adam's Berry Farm. Blueberry harvest has come to an end. The yields were good despite the lack of rain this summer. The continued dry weather produced smaller than normal berries but with excellent flavor due to the high brix content. Fall raspberries are in full swing. SWD is present. For the 3rd year we have netted the majority of our fall raspberries with Pro-Tech 80. This has proved to be effective with the combination of detailed harvesting and chilling post-harvest. These efforts have eliminated the need to spray which feels good in regards to marketing the fruit and protection of our pollinators.

(Rochester) The fall raspberry crop is excellent. We are managing SWD with prompt picking and so far staying ahead of it. Cool nights are helping to slow this pest down.

(Dummerston) I have an accidental undersowing of hairy vetch amongst some late brassicas. I plowed in a cover crop that apparently had already dropped a lot of seed. We had to weed it out of the fall spinach which actually germinated really well in spite of the heat (it rained at just the right time). But around the broccoli it's making a very nice living mulch. Sweet potatoes are enormous this year but rutabagas and Gilfeathers haven't sized up very well; seems to be an Alternaria problem. Pumpkins are ripe and ready so CSA members will have to celebrate Halloween a little early this year. High tunnel tomatoes are making a comeback after having been munched by the deer; too bad we have to pull them out to make room for spinach.

(Westminster West) Last year last year I harvested about 3 bins of pumpkins due to serious field diseases and too much rain. This year 18 bins pumpkins, all heavy, ripe and sound, hardly any rain. Heavy yields of all squash filled all our bins. Lucky to have a neighboring orchard that rented us 21 more bins to complete our harvest. We do have a bacterial spotting that is ruining the Sunshine variety that we never had problems with before. Spaghetti squash has over produced again by a couple thousand pounds. Onions look awesome, largest crop ever and no diseases. Again, we have thousands of pounds extra and will put it all on the list serve soon. Shipping seed garlic, best crop maybe ever! Started production of "Black Garlic" and will find out soon if there is a culinary market for a \$40/lb. specialty crop. Tunnel raspberries show hardly any sign of SWD, although I have seen a bunch out side the tunnel. Late crop tunnel tomatoes coming on strong, but markets are weak at the moment. Finding lots of tomato horn worms totally parasitized, no need to spray Dipel, love that! Fall carrots and beets looking nice, waiting for a rain, just to busy to turn the drips on. Turnips struggling for some reason, may not be many here, although celeriac looks great. Fall is our busy season so losing some key people really hurts but the show must go on. Starting to think about next year; new fields plowed and cover crops growing nice, always makes me happy. Between-beds ground cover experiment looks great and really enjoy the weed free fields!

(Monkton) This season is shaping up to be a good one in spite of irrigation becoming a full time job. Monitoring for leek moth helped us keep them under control and the result is outstanding crops of garlic and onions. Heirloom tomatoes also did really well in spite of the largest community of hornworms we've ever hosted. Sweet potato harvest is underway and the yield seems good in spite of dry conditions. Second-cut hay yield is also good thanks to a few timely showers. We did dig a well and a pond this year since we can't seem to depend on rain. SWD is present but not yet a huge problem. Farmers' markets have been slow and we wonder if this is a trend. We have a great crew and are thankful.

(Winchester NH) With one of our two irrigation wells dry since early August, I'm pleased that most of the fall broccoli, kale, and cabbage is still growing. Delicata harvest was a bust; most of the poor yield is breaking down in storage right away. I think we got in too late. Butternut quality and yield is better than average. We're behind on pulling old plastic, but keeping up with fall cover crops wherever the ground is open and bare. Soon we'll transition two tomato houses over to greens for December CSA.

(Argyle NY) Pleasant Valley Farm. Irrigation still important for keeping everything going and starting all the fall crops. Many summer crops are dwindling but Brassicas growing nicely except lots of cabbage loopers. Flea beetles finally stopped (hurray!) Farmers' markets near us have been running very strong all summer. We have buckwheat in a high tunnel which will be turned under soon as we ready all 3 tunnels for winter greens production. The over-wintered onion crop with Forum, Electric, Hi-Keeper, etc. were the best crop ever but our summer crop is not good at all; win some loose some! Winter squash is maturing early and the sweet potatoes are expected to be great with this very hot summer we have had. Hoping to hire on a few interns for the winter.

POWDERY MILDEW STUDY UNDERWAY

The Northwest Crops and Soils Program of UVM Extension has been evaluating 4 different biofungicide products (Sonata, Cease, Regalia, and Actinovate) for their efficacy in preventing and treating powdery mildew. Results will be shared late fall/winter 2016 and can be found at our website: <http://www.uvm.edu/extension/cropsoil/>. For more info contact abha.gupta@uvm.edu

WASH STATION DESIGN ON-FARM WORKSHOP - TODAY

Fairlee, Tuesday Sept. 13, from 4 to 6 pm. This workshop will cover wash station and crop storage design for an 8 acre diversified vegetable operation. Join Danielle Allen and Ben Dana, from Root 5 Farm, as they discuss the current renovations to their wash station to improve flow and efficiency and come into compliance with Federal Food Safety regulations. Register at: <http://nofavt.org/events/post-harvest-process-wash-station-design>

POST HARVEST PROCESSING OF MEDICINAL HERBS WORKSHOP - TOMORROW

Montpelier, Wednesday Sept. 14 from 6 to 8 pm. This class will be suited for small-scale home gardeners interested in learning how to store and use for a home apothecary to larger scale farmers who want to add value to medicinal herbal agriculture. More info and registration at: <http://nofavt.org/events/post-harvest-processing-medicinal-herbs-market>. This workshop will be repeated in Burlington at the Railyard apothecary on Thursday, September 29th from 6 to 8.

PITNEY FARM FUNDRAISING DINNER

Sunday, October 2 from 4 to 7 pm in Saratoga Springs, NY. This fundraiser is in the final months of the campaign to purchase the historic Pitney Farm and preserve it as a working farm with an agricultural conservation easement. Spearheaded for 5 years by farmers Sandy and Paul Arnold, and Michael Kilpatrick the project is coming to fruition. Join us for this fundraising farm to table feast by Kim Klopstock of Lily and the Rose catering, or give a gift for this project. For more information, to register by Sept. 26, or to give a gift, visit: www.pitneymeadows.org/events or call 518-290-0008. Tickets are \$150 per person; Children under 12 and students \$100.