



Vermont Vegetable and Berry News – September 20, 2011

Compiled by Vern Grubinger, University of Vermont Extension

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

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

REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

(Royalton) End-of-June planted corn will be ready to pick any day; hope we can beat the frost. Planted green onions, radishes, kale, lettuce, arugula, beets 4 weeks ago; radishes and arugula almost ready for harvest (no flea beetle damage planting this late!). Hoophouse #1 is planted to fall lettuce heads; getting hoophouse #2 ready for spinach, carrots, parsnips and greens. Tomatoes are looking pretty sickly, but no late blight yet. June-planted potatoes ready to dig. The fields are still extremely wet, and it's hard to brush hog and till in the buckwheat. Apple crop is amazing this year.

(Jericho) All major harvests completed except for fall carrots, beets, brassicas and greens. Onion crop mostly cleaned and working our way through the garlic crop. Lots of fall building projects underway to get four more hoophouses, an expanded greenhouse, and additional cold storage completed before the ground freezes. Tomatoes making way for fall greens in the hoophouses and with these cold nights tomatoes ripening anymore. Had downy mildew on the basil for the first time this year. Crew is working hard and operating smoothly as a team. Still cleaning up our flooded fields, but making headway and about to turn it all in for cover cropping. From the carrot crop we are catching and hatching out swallow tail caterpillars into butterflies with our six year old son, and the two year old helped us sort tomato seconds today.

(Putney) We applying Chilean like madmen to try to give our greens something after all this rain. Has anyone had any great insight as to how it will be replaced for organic growers? Or will we be expected to till everything under when we get a foot of rain, which happens all too regularly in the northeast.

(Granville NY) If we took out the two hurricanes that dumped rain on us this year we would still have one of the wettest years on record; can't get our overwintered greens in, can't get the strawberries in, onions won't dry enough to get those in either. Have done more tillage this year in too-wet soil than all other years of farming combined. That aside, onion crop looks good, greenhouse tunnels are still doing great; last plantings of squash and cukes are still cranking. Lost a lot to flooding from Irene: all winter squash, Brussels, leeks, fall beets, most potatoes, sweet potatoes, fall carrots, some brassicas, a month worth of greens. Markets have been very strong though for the year. Income is up for the year (though down since flooding) so we may end up surviving: 2011, the year we all floated away.

(Guilford) Very wet soil in many places, so much so that it smells like a swamp with anaerobic decomposition in the soil. Plants dying from saturated soil; raspberry crop gone with some fly larvae and mold. But hoophouses survived with winter spinach and fall flowers. (Editor's alert: the larvae in raspberries are likely Spotted Wing Drosophila, and this is the first instance in VT I know of; the pest recently arrived in NH, PA and MI. See: http://extension.unh.edu/Agric/Docs/swd_9_2011.pdf.)

(Warren) Late blight on high tunnel tomatoes is the nail in the coffin for this season. Not much to do as 3/4 of the fall crops are now plowed under and high tunnel soils rendered unplatable for winter salads by flood water. Aside from re-grading and filling in scoured fields we will be focusing on making compost in a big way. Lots of really nice alfalfa silage bails around for the cost of trucking that will make really nice compost. We are also applying large amounts of rock dust to both the compost and directly to the fields. We are hoping this will deal with the micro nutrient deficiencies we have been seeing. I really like the idea of applying large amounts (10 tons to the acre) of relatively unavailable materials every few years as opposed to available materials several times a season.

(Hoosick Falls, NY) We may have a frost, hoping there is enough leaf cover on the winter squash; it will help that they are way up on the hill. Will harvest acorns since they are ready. Potatoes are starting to rot in the field, after 16+ inches of rain in 12 days the water table is just starting to recede but it is too late. Carrots that we're harvesting are also starting to rot; hopefully storage carrots on top of the hill finish sizing up soon. Last crop of beans drowned and wilted as we were picking them one last time, beet tops are also suffering from too much water. Greenhouse tomatoes are doing well and peppers in their prime are coloring well. We are thankful to have some crops to report on.

(Westminster West) All crops in except fall carrots and beets which are looking really nice, even though I planted them later than I would like. I really didn't want to harvest carrots in November but so it goes. Our Red Wing onions have way too much Botrytis. The tops were clean and no sign of disease yet they are having internal issues. Other varieties are not affected so it's a mystery. Stand sales very strong and wholesale produce is really strong; blessed with good crops this year. Picking fall raspberries like crazy, pushback on price, the economy is not helping but at least I know I won't get fired. Tilling old residue in and planting cover crops. Always feels nice cleaning up the fields and get ready for fall. Cleaning up the barn for NOFA's 40th Anniversary party here on Oct. 1. I hope to see many old friends and many new ones too!

(Plainfield NH) No frost yet. Corn earworm showing up in some corn blocks, wondering if it's due to old trap lures (even if stored in freezer) being ineffective or the influx from Irene that came in those couple of days we weren't able to spray. Losing about 35% in grading, and I am concerned about escapees after pack out. Trying to get potatoes up, but with reduced work force, shortening days and lots to still harvest and sell, it is difficult to make any headway. Greenhouse tomatoes holding on, colored peppers very brisk but flood pretty well did away with brassicas and 'little stuff' for the stand. Fall vines look good, I'm impressed how well they stood up this year until the bitter end; negligible Powdery Mildew or Alternaria. Have not sprayed carrot tops recently but they too look really clean. Wholesale still seems pretty good but it feels as though we are hitting the 'fall wall' where business is great when the weather is warm and sunny, slack during weekdays and anything slightly cloudy.

(Argyle NY) Irene didn't do much damage but the next rains and thunderstorms, with nearly 13" of rain over 9 days, did. Lettuce took a beating and fall spinach is suffering; diseases came in on beets, squash. However, on the bright side, it has dried up. We harvested most winter squash, with butternut now ready. Some squash is already breaking down in storage. Sweet potatoes look great and we will harvest soon. The 4000 Chandler strawberry plugs we grew from tips were planted on Biotello with straw mulch in-between (chopped by our Teagle 3 point hitch round bale shredder that we love). High tunnels are cleared out and ready for planting spinach, salad mix and greens for winter.

We will be trialing lots of spinach varieties and using beneficial mites to prevent the spinach mite problem we had last year in another tunnel. Markets are strong; customers tolerant about lacking some products due to storms. We encourage them to plan their meals around what the farmers have that day.

(Plainfield) Fall Raspberries overwhelming their trellis. Late blight in field tomatoes, but still OK in greenhouses; cherry tomato production way down from peak. Carrots sold out quickly. Mowed potato vines (and weeds). Kale responded well to Pro-Booster. Chard all spotty. Rutabaga harvest just starting. Daikon needs another week or two. Great pick of Carmen and Italia red peppers. Usual mix of success and failure. No frost, no flood; lucky this time.

(Bath MI) Rain today was welcomed after seeding beds that the movable tunnel will be pushed over in a few weeks. Baby and regular size spinach, hakurei turnips, red and french breakfast radishes, and broccoli raab all went in. In the bigger stationary tunnel most of the beds are planted. Carrots look good in three beds but spotty in the other two; red beets look great, chard and kale should put on enough growth in the next month to be ready to harvest most of the winter. Turnips and broccoli raab are growing, and we are half way through salad mix plantings. Waiting to pull sweet potatoes until the first or second week of October to make room for last salad mix planting. Trying kohlrabi for the winter for the first time but not sure we got it in early enough; will know in three to four weeks. If not, we might put in a late planting of spinach for March harvests Looking forward to moving the tunnel for the first time to see how it goes.

VTAMP HELPS FARMERS RESOLVE PROBLEMS

The Vermont Agricultural Mediation Program (VTAMP) provides free mediation services to the agricultural community in Vermont. Due to the recent flooding, farms may have insurance claim issues, USDA program compliance issues, or other financial issues. VTAMP is a non-profit organization that can help farms resolve these and other agricultural issues without a fee. For more information see: www.vtamp.org or call 802-583-1100 or email matts@emcenter.org.

GROWING PLACES COURSE FOR STARTING AN AG BUSINESS

If you are interested in starting a farm, specialty food business or other agriculture-related enterprise this class will help you develop goals, identify and evaluate current resources and marketing strategies. You will also learn about state and federal agricultural programs and organizations that provide support. There will be a class in Springfield on 3 consecutive Wednesdays, beginning Oct. 12. The Middlebury class will meet on Saturdays, Oct. 15, 22 and 29. Sessions run from 9:30 to 3:30. The fee is \$100 if postmarked by Sept. 30, \$135 until Oct. 5; add a \$25 late fee after that.

Registrations for the four-week online course, which runs from Jan. 9 to Feb. 5, are due by Dec. 15 for the early discount. Course information and a registration form are at: www.uvm.edu/newfarmer; click on Classes, or send your name and address to wagn@uvm.edu or call (802) 223-2389, ext. 204 to have a registration form mailed to you or to request additional information.

NOFA'S 40TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

Please join us as we celebrate our farmers, the communities that support them and the work of NOFA at NOFA's 40th Birthday celebration on October 1. There will be a local foods feast, farm Olympics, live music, and great company - including Samuel Kaymen, founder of both NOFA and Stonyfield Farm. October 1 from 5 to 10 pm at High Meadows Farm, Westminster West, VT. \$25 for adults, \$10 for ages 13 and under, kids 5 and under free; FREE for flood-impacted farmers (limit 2 people per farm). RSVP by Sept. 28: (802) 434-4122 or online <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/NOFA40th>.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE AND DONATIONS FOR FLOODED FARMS

Vermont Farm Disaster Relief Fund: <http://www.vermontcf.org/farm-fund-application/> or call 802-388-3355. Second round of applications due Sept. 30 with decisions on Oct. 7, checks mailed by Oct. 14. Depending on resources available, additional grant rounds may be added. Up to \$10,000 will be awarded to eligible farms. To donate: <http://give.vtfloodresponse.org/> or mail checks to: The Vermont Community Foundation, PO Box 30, Middlebury VT 05753.

Vermont Farm Fund: http://www.hardwickagriculture.org/join_16_2425782636.pdf or call 802-472-5840. Applications accepted on a rolling basis. Decisions will be made within 14 business days. Zero-interest loans for eligible farms of \$5,000 to \$10,000, payable over 2 years. Donate at: <http://www.hardwickagriculture.org/donate.html> or send check payable to Vermont Farm Fund to: Center for an Agricultural Economy, PO Box 451, Hardwick VT 05843.

NOFA-VT Farmer Emergency Fund: <http://nofavt.org/programs/farm-financial-resources/farmer-emergency-fund> or call 802-434-4122. Grants and zero interest loans to organic farmers. Donate online or send checks to: NOFA Famer Emergency Fund, PO Box 697, Richmond VT 05477.

Intervale Center Farmer Recover Fund helps farmers in the Intervale (all of whom were flooded) offset their losses from Hurricane Irene. Donate at <http://www.intervale.org/support/> or send checks to: Intervale Center, 180 Intervale Road, Burlington VT 05401.

Vermont Economic Development Authority (VEDA) agricultural financing program, the Vermont Agricultural Credit Corporation (VACC) offers emergency agricultural loans up to \$100,000 for farms damaged by Irene. The interest rate is 1% for the first two years, with no payments in the first year. At the beginning of the third year, the rate will adjust to the VACC Prime variable index. Financing is available for a variety of farm losses and damage attributable to Irene, including crop supplies, seed, livestock, fertilizer, machinery and equipment, fuel, lost inventory, and storm-related repairs to land, buildings and machinery. Applications reviewed and loans approved on a first-come, first-served basis until funds are exhausted. Apply at www.veda.org, call 802-828-5627 or email info@veda.org.

RECOVERY RESOURCES FOR FLOODED FARMS

University of Vermont Extension has a page with links to information related to flooding, including emergency unemployment payments, interpreting heavy metals soil tests, dealing with flooded livestock feed, etc. See: <http://www.uvm.edu/extension/?Page=emergency.html>.