

Vermont Vegetable and Berry News – Sept. 22, 2009

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REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

(Montpelier) Late blight is finally taking hold in one greenhouse. Plants were finishing up so I tore them all out. Trying to get an EQIP project finished before the deadline. This wonderful run of weather has all the late plantings outside doing real well. Greenhouses are being renovated and flipped for winter production. Still have more flats to get seeded in the next week. Finally found the right cultivars for winter production so ramping up production of those this winter. Meatbirds and meat ducks are doing well. Demand remains high for produce and meat. Just need to make it to end of October then things finally start to slow down. Losing about 20% of potatoes in storage to hollow rot and some other rot, not late blight though. Garlic is showing blue mold and perhaps Botrytis in storage. Deer are staying out of things so far, perhaps due to the bumper wild apple crop? Winter squash are out of the field, they never really sized up. Cannalini beans are drying. Looking forward to be able to sit and think soon. Continued happy harvest everyone. Look forward to seeing you at winter meetings.

(Bradford) The fall raspberries are great. Heritage and Kiwi Gold are coming in very nicely. Hopefully there's no early frost in sight. The yellow jacket traps suggested in the last newsletter are working great. They are loaded with yellow jackets.

(S. Royalton) With all the dry weather the melons have hung on for a long time, only a few will not ripen. Sweet potatoes have an outstanding yield (yes even this year you can grow them in Vermont). Late corn is suffering from a lack of nutrients; plants are yellow with small ears. Farmers' market customers are still off but showing signs of returning. Meanwhile, farm stand sales have been their strongest ever. I'd love to figure that one out.

(Plymouth) Our greenhouse tomatoes are winding down, and mercifully escaped the late blight. Crop was small, but of excellent quality. We grew many varieties of heirloom tomatoes. Potatoes are all dug, and those too escaped the blight, although we did cut, remove, and bag up all the foliage several weeks ago. Again, small crops of all of these. Greens planted on August 13 are being harvested now: green kale, Chinese cabbage, tatsoi, arugula, and baby bok choy. All looking very nice and bug free. Broccoli is making huge side shoots now. White Wing, Expression, and Cortland onions are mostly in, but the Redwings are still growing. Very good crops of these, most are very large onions. Sweet Mama and Nutty Delica squashes sized up huge (some weighing in at 7 pounds) this summer, but again small crops. Transplanted lettuces into the greenhouse yesterday. Waiting on the Rosa Bianca eggplants in the greenhouse. Almost gave up on these a month ago, and was tempted to pull them up! It will be a small crop, but they will be mighty tasty. Also in the greenhouse, Chocolate peppers are turning brown. Valencia and Revolution are huge and mostly green still; trying to be patient. Nine varieties of heirloom garlic are all in and curing. Some performed better than others, but it's not about great yields, it's all about keeping these old varieties in production. Pulled up the green beans today; after a very good bean season which started out very slow with many re-plantings into June. We grew Bush Roma, Bush Blue Lake, and Provider, and the Blue Lakes outperformed them all.

(Royalton) Summer squash and zucchini still pumping out fruits; we dodged the first frost warning, and even the basil survived and is good enough for drying. Cherry tomatoes were finally retired from hoophouse to plant it to spinach and space for curing winter squash and pie pumpkins. Kale and chard from April 17th transplantings still producing-- the rhubarb is still going! Apples are ripe, and the last of the crenshaw melons are being harvested. It definitely feels like fall.

(Plainfield NH) The good news is the sales and demand are still strong. However, inputs this year are just trashing the profitability side of the column, I'm sure. Just finished getting plasticulture strawberry plants in. Tough to do with all the harvesting and packing to do daily. Still picking nice corn and field tomatoes, fall raspberries. But pumpkins, winter squash and fall vines were planted on the heavier soil, so fall harvest of those crops were done in record time - because there was so little of anything to harvest. The disease list continues to expand at this farm with some notable first time appearance of things we have never seen before, besides late blight. Verticillium in eggplant (that's a first), bacterial leaf spot on pepper leaves and corn borer damage on pepper leaves and stems (also a first), and to hit it out of the park we have had our carrot roots diagnosed with *Alternaria radacina* (enough already!). No, Good Reader, this is not your usual *Alternaria* that melts your tops, but it melts the roots. Starts out looking like the root has excema, eventually rotting it. We're told it might have occurred in a complex with carrot rust fly (hello? Anybody regularly plagued by that one, or can you even identify it?) We are told it could be seedborne as well, and that we should rotate out of those infested areas for at least a year. So.... it's been an educational, summer, I suppose.

(Northfield/Moretown) Our 350 heirloom tomato plants have been pulled and disposed off but still am managing to fight off the early stages of LB on the greenhouse tomatoes. The Valencia heirlooms seem to have been the last to get it and the easiest to contain it; by far the most resistant variety I grew this year. The first heavy frost has hit and taken it's casualties with it, but not anything of concern; pumpkins, winter squash and field basil. Got 90% of the squash in before the frost. The fall crops are doing well and the turnips, under row covers have flawless bulbs and huge tender greens.

(Salisbury NH) Several people around us claim they've had frost. We haven't, but temps down around 42 in the morning. Growth has slowed to a crawl. We have string beans just starting on our final row of the season. Last batch of cukes are producing wonderfully. Broccoli and cauliflower very nice too. Brussel sprouts are small, not sure if they'll make it. We pulled up all the tomato plants because of blight and have been culling tomatoes. Some missed the blight and others not. Ever hopeful, wait until next year. We have lots of plans already. Hope to see everyone at the Fruit and Veggie December conference (editor's note: <http://www.newenglandvfc.org/>)

(Westminster West) Well we just missed getting frosted, we did go down to 34F. Squash harvest is in full swing, a really large healthy yield this year. Installed new vegetable washing line to handle it. Great looking squash and all wonderfully ripe. Strangely, our gourds didn't do well. Picking great field grown spinach, good prices, over \$4 per lb. Seed garlic sold out, hope to ship all orders by week's end, so busy with harvest. Pumpkins all in barn, good looking crop. Cover crops up and growing well. All crops selling well and good prices this year. Started construction on new 3500 sq.ft. greenhouse. Hope to incorporate all that we have learned in building greenhouses over last 35 years into this one. All of last year's energy conservation measures installed in existing greenhouses not only paid for themselves this season but increased our margins significantly. Here's to a nice long Indian Summer!

(Durham CT) Fall greens are the best- the way they taste, the way they grow and the way they look. We're real busy with fall planting. Just a few more days and the first wave of Bordeaux spinach will be ready to harvest. Customers really like the red vein and the taste of this spinach. Fall carrots are coming along well. Biggest challenge is to get all the tomatoes out of the high tunnels and get the winter greens planted so there will be enough time to have a big crop for the late fall and early winter. Will be planting Renegade spinach from High Mowing and Regiment from Johnny's this year. Also a lot of kale and claytonia. Interested in starting baby bok choy that should be of harvestable size by next february. Would like to hear from other growers about what works well for them for winter high tunnels. (editor's note – stay tuned for winter grower's reports from the field, coming soon)

(Argyle NY) September has been a month of recuperation for lots of crops and a time for new crops to grow. We lost most of the onions due to diseases due to the hail, as expected. However, most of the fall brassica crops look great; we gave them extra nitrogen this year and they are responding nicely. We transplanted all our own strawberry plugs the first week of September onto raised Biotello (cornstarch 'plastic' mulch) beds with hay mulch between paths and they seem to be doing well with the sun and irrigation. Late blight is on our tomatoes (in tunnel and out), but pruning/copper stalled the spread and they are still producing nicely. The summer high tunnel is now 1/2 planted to spinach with transplants of many Asian Greens ready to go in soon as we rip out the tomatoes, basil, and cucumbers soon. The second high tunnel is filled with our trial sweet potatoes, so we'll report on those next time as they'll be harvested soon. Farmers' markets have remained very strong and we have lots of potatoes, beets, carrots, and winter squash to harvest for the root cellar upon our return from vacation seeing National Parks out West. It's been wonderful getting away from the farm in September (first time ever) and having a great intern/hourly crew to keep the farm going. We are truly blessed in many ways despite the challenges 2009 brought most of us.

UPDATES FROM THE UVM PLANT DIAGNOSTIC CLINIC

By Ann Hazelrigg

Two different problems on potato tubers have shown up in the last couple of weeks. Fusarium dry rot was found on several tubers (Yukon Gold) causing a sunken dry (not smelly or mushy) rot at the stolon end of the tuber. The fungus was easy to see after a couple of days on the lab bench. Fusarium dry rot is probably the most important cause of postharvest potato losses in the northeast. Symptoms include an internal black rot that is usually dry. The soil borne pathogen infects bruises or cuts at harvest and can rot out the center of the potato. Often you can see a white or pinkish mold at the rotted spot. Diagnosing the disease can be tricky because soft rotting bacteria move in quickly and break down the tissue and cause a smelly rot and mask the original pathogen. For pictures and more info go to http://vegetablemdonline.ppath.cornell.edu/factsheets/Potato_Fusarium.htm.

Some German butterball samples came in with interesting circular rings on the tubers. I sent pictures to Dr. Tom Zitter at Cornell and he said it was typical for the Potato Virus Y disease. I saw a lot of this disease on the foliage of plants (often Yukon Gold) that caused a necrosis (death) and blackening of the leaf veins on the foliage. PVY is one of the most important viruses infecting potatoes. It is readily spread by aphids as well as mechanically by human activity and may result in severely depressed yields. PVY is tuber borne. Symptoms caused by PVY infection can vary depending upon the strain and potato variety grown. Vein necrosis may progress to total leaf collapse, with the dead leaflet clinging to the stem. I saw this on several farms this summer.

Besides infecting potato, PVY affects other solanaceous crops (tomato, pepper) and weeds (nightshade, groundcherry). Control depends on the use of disease-free seed, insecticides to reduce aphid populations, and mineral oil sprays to interfere with the aphid transmission process. For pictures and more info http://vegetablemdonline.ppath.cornell.edu/factsheets/Virus_Potato.htm.

SIGN UP BY OCT. 1 TO BE ELIGIBLE FOR NRCS COST SHARE PROGRAMS

(by Deb Heleba, UVM Extension)

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has a number of cost share programs that may be of interest to vegetable and berry growers. The sign up deadline is coming up soon for two programs—the Agricultural Management Assistance Program (AMA) and Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). Applications are accepted on a continuous basis. However, if you're interested in being considered for funding in 2010, you must submit an application to your local NRCS field office by Oct. 1, 2009. Through these programs, growers have been able to receive financial assistance to install irrigation and agri-chemical handling systems; conduct the Cornell soil health tests; set up stream crossings and compost pads; fund cover cropping, mulching, crop rotation, and IPM practices; and transition to organic. For more information about NRCS and its programs, stop by your local office and/or visit the Vermont NRCS website at <http://www.vt.nrcs.usda.gov/>.

JOHNNY'S SEEDS FIELD DAY OCT. 21 ALBION ME

Johnny's Research Farm, Albion, Maine, 3-6 pm.

Growers are invited to tour the extensive trial fields, connect with other growers, and converse with Johnny's research staff. Some of the crops showcased include spinach, carrots, leeks, cauliflower, kale, collards, storage cabbage, onions, winter squash, Brussels sprouts, pumpkins, and gourds. Weather permitting there will be a demonstration of the quick hoops bender and other season extension methods and products. Questions? Contact Kelly Dionne at kdionne@johnnyseeds.com or call 877-564-6697. Light refreshments will be served.