



Vermont Vegetable and Berry News – Sept. 25, 2012
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REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

(Warren) Still amazed at what spraying Solubor pre-plant does for us when it comes to beets. Hopefully I will be more consistent with that next year. Onions sized up well but between the basal rot, the bacterial rot and downy mildew most are in the compost. We are growing all our alliums on a different farm for the next few years and leaving nothing in the field. Winter squash was bumper and excellent quality. Carrots are really nice too. Potatoes planted really late and hammered with CPB and leafhoppers are yielding really well. We put drip on them and were really liberal with it. They received weekly sprays of Sea Crop and got a full range of macro and micro elements through the drip. That approach has worked well for us. I see a real difference especially on salad greens if I miss a week of spraying: weekly spraying, no mildew; miss a week or so and it pops back up. Applications of rotted wood of about 20 yards to the acre seem to make no difference in terms of N tie up. I'm looking forward to fall soil test results to see if the 10 ton to the acre applications last fall of both granite and basalt dust chelated enough to show up. Potassium seems to be limiting for us and the granite dust is supposed to be a good long term source.

(Cambridge) Pretty much everything is out of the field at this point I'm just cleaning up and waiting until October to plant garlic. To sum up the season: the alliums rocked; the garlic and leeks thrived and I have never grown such large onions. Winter squash did pretty well and sized up nicely with just a few rounds of irrigation in mid-July. Sweet corn also did really well. The legumes did horribly: peas all died from some kind of root-rot in the spring and beans got hammered by potato leaf hoppers all summer. Even the edamame haven't amounted to anything and are just barely reaching half their normal size. The blueberries looked really promising with tons of berries on the bushes in June but when we went to pick there never seemed to be many ripe ones. I'm fairly sure it was not birds. There is a groundhog in residence but I can't imagine he took the spoils from over 200 bushes every day. I have seen more squirrels and chipmunks this year than ever before. If they are the thieves, I am not sure how to battle them next year; hoping for a cold winter to reduce their population.

(Woodbury) Had a light frost a few weeks ago, my last planting of beans took a little hit; not sure if they will finish. Winter squash is nice; hope demand is there at the market. Fall carrots not so shiny, had to replant and had poor germ with the dry weather. Next year will be different. Our fall broccoli brings tears to my eyes it's so beautiful, and was well received at market. Another planting starting to head behind the current one may or may not make it; fingers crossed. We are abandoning forward progress on our blueberries until this SWD mess gets sorted out. We had planted 150 bushes with plans for adding 300 more; all that is on hold. Cleaning up, field work, getting ready for next year, the usual fall stuff, just trying to finish. Next spring gets closer every day.

(Weare NH) In the field we will prep soil for a new high tunnel as well as tilling after harvest and sowing cover crops. Now through October is busy with field work culminating with planting garlic. We had a serious influx of insects in our kale, which I've knocked back with Pyganic, hopefully the plants will grow out as a lot of our Lacinato is unmarketable. The deer found our carrots and did a job on the tops, but the roots seem in good shape and we fixed our deer fence. Markets have been good and continue to be strong, despite the turn of the season.

(Burlington) Quality looks good on lots of our early fall storage crops: butternut is nicely mature, potato skins are relatively light on scab. Really liking the insect and disease resistance, yield, and eating quality of 'Keuka Gold'. Though skins are less scabby than Yukon, they have a light russeting that I don't recall. Starting to see lots of field diseases. Phytophthora is cropping up in cucurbits and peppers, several brassica rots. I love this time of year, but it's always a bit disappointing (though a relief) to see the glorious summer crops melt into the ground.

(Wolcott) We have three new fields certified this year and as the yields come in on the earlier seed crops we can really see the differences in fertility. One field that we cover-cropped for two years running as we waited for it to be certifiable has bumper yield numbers that we've hardly ever seen before. We like crimson clover as a legume cover crop with a small seed to sow that grows and also winter kills. It works well as a between-row cover for fields of plastic-mulched rows because you don't have to till it in the way you do a pea/oat mix. It gets pretty lush and does go to seed pretty quickly, but not enough to be a problem the next year. Unlike berseem clover, which doesn't seem to grow well unless it's planted alone, crimson clover does fine planted with oats or another grass. It doesn't grow as fast as peas but the seed is cheaper per acre.

(Grand Isle) We began harvest today of the pumpkins grown on land that had winter rye killed by a roller-crimper and was then deep zone tilled, both courtesy of UVM Extension. Our land is heavy clay, but because the pumpkins laid on the rye straw we had the cleanest pumpkins ever! The yield was low, but that was due to lack of rain. I think all that straw mulch helped by keeping whatever moisture there was from evaporating.

(Salisbury NH) Things are winding down quickly in the field; had a light frost. Last plantings of cukes looking very sad afterwards. String beans holding on but growth has really slowed. Long Island Brussel Sprouts are way behind; maybe we got plugs in later than usual. Never enough carrots. Behind already in planting hoophouse. Have to change plastic next weekend if the wind doesn't prevent it. Hate red sorrel, witchgrass and carpetgrass this year. Stink bugs have finally let up. SWD in raspberries slowed down a little with Spinosad. Cleaned up all the dead field tomatoes vines. Cherry tomatoes in the hoophouse are exceptionally sweet with little watering. Celery finally coming along in hoophouse but the outdoor planting was much better and with the recent rains it isn't so stringy and bitter but it still hasn't sized up. Tried blanching with paperbag material and elastic. Customer activity is spotty. Wicked busy Saturday then barely any customers Sunday. Already dreaming of next year and how much better we will do things!

(Westminster West) The weather has been fantastic; even the hardest jobs just go better when it's nice outside. Finished the squash harvest using our new plastic bulk bins and tractor forks, what a pleasure and an end to backbreaking work. We loaded 20 very full bins directly into an empty high tunnel for curing before transferring bins into the barn storage for cleaning and packing. Wholesales sales are strong already. Fall crops are looking mighty good. Onions sized up really well and sales have been strong. Huge garlic crop and most is sold for seed stock to other growers; our own planting season coming right up. Planting on new ground to insure disease free soil to protect our seed stock. Fall beets and carrots are perfect and spinach crop is huge with this awesome weather. Started pulling our Gillfeather turnips a bit earlier than planned because the demand is strong now and they are ready. Fall mum and Aster crops are the best we have had in years and sales are running much ahead over last years. Still picking tunnel tomatoes with the grape type yielding a crazy amount of sweet red fruit. Fall raspberries strong and no sign of SWD now, a big relief! Still lots of harvesting to go, potatoes, etc. and field work to do. So satisfying to see all the cover crops thick and tall, especially the pea and oat combo! I will never plant winter rye again! Farmers' market sales are excellent and our little self-serve stand filled with all the pumpkins and gourds awaits the hordes of tourists this weekend. Looking forward to winter meetings already, but sure enjoying this super extended summer weather!

UPCOMING EVENTS, see: <http://www.uvm.edu/vtvegandberry/meetings/meetlist.html>

Sept. 27 at 4 pm. Organic Potato Production at Foote Brook Farm, Johnson. Tony Lehouillier, owner of certified organic Foote Brook Farm in Johnson, VT, will cover the following essentials for potato production: understanding your soils, cultivation techniques, irrigation needs, harvesting with a two-roll picker, and disease issues.

Oct. 2 at 3 pm. Winter Tunnel Production at Bread and Butter Farm, Shelburne. Corie Pierce will explain the four keys to winter hoop house production: crop selection, timing seeding and planting, crop protection needs, and overall system management she uses to harvest kale, chard, spinach, cilantro and other crops most of the year.

Oct. 10 at 3 pm. Swede Midge Management, Intervale Community Farm, Burlington. Andy Jones and Dr. Yolanda Chen will discuss what is known about this midge that has recently expanded its range in the Vermont and is destroying some crucifer crops: what are signs of damage, how to monitor for it, and the current best practices for controlling this pest in organic systems.