



Vermont Vegetable and Berry News – September 27, 2017

compiled by Vern Grubinger, University of Vermont Extension

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

www.uvm.edu/vtvegandberry

UPCOMING EVENTS

Today - Sept. 27. Harvest Efficiency for Carrot and Beet Crops. Jericho Settlers Farm, 3-6 pm.
<https://nofavt.org/events/farm-smarter-not-harder-harvest-efficiency-carrot-beet-crops>

Oct. 12. Cover crop workshop featuring inter-seeding. River Berry Farm, Fairfax, 3-5 pm.
<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/cover-cropping-management-on-a-vegetable-farm-tickets-37970548934>

Nov. 7-8. Produce Safety Alliance Grower Training. VYCC West Monitor Barn, Richmond, VT
<https://www.regonline.com/builder/site/Default.aspx?EventID=2032920>

Dec. 12-14. New England Vegetable and Fruit Conference and Trade Show. Manchester NH.
Mark your calendars. <https://newenglandvfc.org/>

Jan. 22, 2018. VVBGA Annual Meeting, Fairlee VT. Mark your calendars.

REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

(Shelburne/South Burlington) Like everyone else, this heat is proving to have some good things and bad. Our summer crops have had a second life like never before, especially the tomatoes. The winter crops are more stressed than ever as most are still in the cells and growing more quickly than usual, so we are balancing the pros and cons.

Our veggie production has primarily been in hoophouses, with a focus on winter production. This year we put in our first outdoor garden and made raised beds, right on top of our Vergennes clay, and set up a no-till situation. It was a grand experiment that has worked very well, especially given the early wet and coolness of the summer. The high organic matter, raised beds performed really well in both early wet/cool, and then later dry summer. We experimented with living mulches, ground covered undersowed in the brassicas, and just a bunch of different crops, we also learned a lot! Look forward to expanding these gardens.

(Orwell) Extended summer warmth is a boon to our later tomatoes, and most of the plants are remarkably disease free. Keeping the evening dew out even on warm nights seems to help lessen disease pressure, although at this point, we are ready to move on to winter greens and get lazy with opening and closing religiously.

One big disappointment this season has been that the canning facility we've used for the past several years is changing ownership, and the cost and time of processing (not to mention matching their level of quality) is daunting.

On the field side of things, seeding cover crops with adequate moisture is tricky with this heat and extended dry. Hoping for a squirt of rain in the next few days to get things to pop as the time window for good establishment quickly closes.

(Fairfax) What Weather. I thought I should have my head examined as I aimlessly kept transplanting into early September, when there was a lot of cold weather after a touch of frost in late August. As I was continuing to plant I remembered a conversation with Dr. Fred Magdoff of UVM. I am fortunate to live near him and we often talk of the weather. He mentioned a discussion with a climatologist at the Miner Institute in NY who stated that whatever the weather has been like for the last 2 or 3 weeks it will likely be the opposite of that for the coming few weeks. Most seasons average out both in temperature and precipitation, though there can be the odd year that strays far from the average.

This heat has really helped us out. Were now cutting some of our nicest lettuce of the season, and looks like cabbage that didn't have a prayer to size up is going to make it. I guess I got lucky and the weather started to average out!

(East Charlotte) Adam's Berry Farm. The heat has caused the fall raspberries to ripen as we pick and it has been hard to stay on top of the harvest. Our crew is burnt out from picking raspberries for 6 hours every day. SWD has also been relentless with the heat in the one raspberry house that we did not use insect netting on. The netting on our other houses has proved to effective for keeping SWD under control.

We are still harvesting blueberries, probably for another week. Day neutral strawberries are steady. We have not been wowed by them and we are certainly not making an extra \$20,000 as one grower reported to us. That said, they have been a nice addition for Farmers' Market sales, drawing customers in. Fall projects in motion; 2 new hoopouses to replace Haygroves, prepping new strawberry fields for better rotations, and this year we finally got fall cover crops on by our target date and the stands look like nice.

(Elmore) Very hot and dry. All fruit ripened about 3 weeks earlier than usual and was smaller than usual. This included pears, apples, grapes, plums, gooseberries and elderberries. Nice hazelbert harvest and great drying weather. No yellow jackets at cider pressing time was a bonus but wondering why they are not here.

Saw two Monarch butterflies so far, on the native Aster and Joe Pye weed. Keeping sections of our fields in wildflowers so native pollinators will have a place to go and be nourished. Many are feasting on hydrangea blossoms this week. We need rain, but a gentle all night kind. Excellent tree fruit quality this year with zero sprays. This only happens once in a while and we are grateful.

(Westminster West) I would never have guessed that I would be irrigating fall crops at the end of Sept. but here it is, a very dry and hot end to the season. This is actually the type of season I was hoping for as some of my fall crops went in late and still just sizing up. Carrots are about ready, Bolero of course. Gilfeather turnips still a month away but they grow almost under any condition so im sure they can make it along with its cousin the rutabaga.

Just finished bringing in the Red Wing onions, late as always! I prefer Cabernet, it's much earlier, and will discontinue Red Wing next year. Funny thing, though I didn't have an onion thrips problem this year, after we finished harvesting the main crop, apparently onion thrips jumped over to the leek crop, as they were suddenly covered with them and much leaf damage occurred. That's never happened to my leeks before. A later crop of leeks in a distant field are fine.

Sweet potato harvesting tomorrow, crop looks awesome and virtually no weeds thanks to the ground covers between the beds. Sales are much ahead of last year, but so are labor expenses but I won't complain as I have adequate fall help to get the work done, and that's getting harder to come by. Tunnel raspberries are doing fine, sell out as many as we can pick.

Black garlic sales are very strong and starting to ship out of state to expand sales area. I have some seed garlic available for sale but most of my production will now go into the fermenter!

(Plainfield NH) Hot dry weather, like what we could have used in June and July, has been a game changer for many. So dry and hot that the maple leaves are drying up to a brown color and falling from the trees prematurely. For us, we are seeing the maturation of Hail Mary plantings of vegetables that looked questionable on Labor Day.

Pumpkin and hard squash matured nicely and late planting of carrots look like a shoe in for harvest now. Too hot to be enjoyable working in. 5 days of 90-degree heat, and looking forward to sweatshirt weather.

A downside for us: SWD in fall raspberries. Usually by this time of year we are only concerned with soft fruit rots, but the heat has ramped up reproductive cycles of SWD such that we have had to interrupt harvest to spray for them. Using Spinetoram and looking forward to the colder temps to slow the onslaught down. Has never been a problem before in the fall raspberries.

Digging potatoes and crossing fingers that the elderly harvester will make it through another season. Topping and grading onions, digging carrots, and all manner of vegetables (the last plantings of summer cucurbits has marshalled valiantly on but is slowly succumbing to mildews and foliar diseases.) Labor in short supply, but sales remain healthy.

(Ange-Gardien, Quebec) Very hot and dry weather for more than 2 weeks now. Hope the sweet potatoes will benefit from this as most melon crop do not have any foliage left to catch all this free energy. Market prices went down as loads of vegetables are available on the market. I kind of rely on a few rainy days to transplant overwintering stuff in greenhouse. I had to forget about it and transplant everything on these beautiful sunny days. That was pretty hot though.

Did finished to sow winter wheat on the best conditions ever. The unusually dry weather was great to control quackgrass in my field crops. Pythium struck direct seeded spinach. Do not know what to do about it.

(Little Compton RI) Down in south-coastal New England we really got pasted by Hurricane Jose which stayed off the coast 100 miles but gave us 4 days of 30 mph winds with 65mph gusts. That took a layer of plastic off one of our tunnels, but the worst damage was on our 3-week old kale and broccoli transplants. They had taken root enough to be Lely harrowed twice but the incessant wind was just too much stress and it looks like we will have 30% losses. Could be some salt damage in there too as the ocean was roaring with giant waves.

A most important task after the wind was the removal of all our dark green winter squashes out of the fields. All the leaves were shredded, so the squashes were suddenly in direct sunlight. I learned eight years ago, in a similar fall, that immature dark green acorn, Buttercup, Kabocha, etc. will get sun scalded just like peppers often do after a sudden wind or rain event.

Brussels sprouts looking good but Alternaria is creeping in from the bottom up. Copper not helping much that I can see. Fall strawberries just went into plastic beds. A new venture for us.

TEST YOUR SEED GARLIC FOR NEMATODES

I am seeing the results of testing from Vermont farms and while most garlic is “clean” some is highly infested with garlic bloat nematode. It is good practice to test your garlic seed for nematodes before planting, and especially before selling garlic to other growers! We do not want to spread this pest around.

One lab that specializes in nematode testing and is low cost is at the University of Arkansas. I worked with them several years ago when they tested samples from several Vermont farms (and again, we found nematodes present, especially on garlic that looked “bad” i.e. had brown areas.)

The cost for each sample is \$25, and each sample must be mailed with a completed submission form and the APHIS permit they have for interstate shipping if plants. I have both of these forms and will email them to you on request.

You should submit 10 bulbs for each sample to be tested. Ideally you will test what you plant/sell (good looking bulbs) but to really know if you have GBN, also send 10 funky looking bulbs with basal browning. Of course you'll have to pay for 2 samples to do that.

More info on GBN:

https://ag.umass.edu/sites/ag.umass.edu/files/fact-sheets/pdf/garlic_bloat_nematode_vegetable_fact_sheet.pdf

LOOK OUT FOR SQUASH VINE BORER IN FRUIT

Maybe it's related to the late warm weather, we have had two unusual reports of squash vine borer attacking mature winter squash/pumpkin fruits. If you, too, find this occurring on your farm please let me know. Though preferring vines, the pest will invade fruit. It has a large, dark head and small angled marks on the ‘shield’ of their head. They can overwinter in Vermont so try to destroy all infested fruit so the larvae do not survive to re-infest next year.

Additional info:

<http://ento.psu.edu/extension/factsheets/squash-vine-borer>

http://entnemdept.ufl.edu/creatures/veg/leaf/squash_vine_borer.htm

<http://www.extension.umn.edu/garden/insects/find/squash-vine-borers/>

ARE YOU COVERED FOR CROP LOSSES?

The excessive wet weather this year proved challenging for Vermont farmers. Some farmers were unable to plant at the start of the season, and many face reduced crop yields and/or lower quality. Producers with coverage through the RMA-administered federal crop insurance program will be paid for covered losses. Some growers with non-insurable crops may have signed up for the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) program through the Farm Service Agency (FSA). This is one of their disaster protection and recovery options. Please note: crop insurance is not the same as NAP coverage.

Every farmer has to plan ahead to determine how he or she will manage potential risks. Crop insurance, like other types of insurance, has to be purchased in advance. Unless you have coverage in place when disaster strikes, crop insurance won't provide any assistance. To get more information and to locate a USDA-licensed crop insurance agent, email jake.jacobs@uvm.edu Crop Insurance Education Coordinator, or call her at 802-656-7356, or visit <https://www.rma.usda.gov/> for information about managing risk for your farm business.