



Vermont Vegetable and Berry News –September 30, 2019
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NEW ENGLAND VEGETABLE AND FRUIT CONFERENCE

Registration is now open for this every-other-year event which takes place December 10-12, 2019 in Manchester NH. The program features 30 educational sessions full of practical information for vegetable, berry and tree fruit growers. Eleven farmer-to-farmer sessions bring speakers and growers together for informal discussion on a variety of topics. The trade show has over 120 exhibitors. See the full conference program at: <https://newenglandvfc.org/>

Registration costs \$115 for all 3 days and \$85 for each additional member of the farm. Fees increase after November 29. Register at: <https://newenglandvfc.org/registration>. Make your own lodging arrangements soon, as local hotels fill up fast.

REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

(Orwell) Finally a little rain to revive the pastures and offer an opportunity for cover crop seeding—it's been a dry past month. The spectacular weather has helped the tunnel tomatoes hang on with decent production. But the markets have slowed down dramatically as people's diets seem to shift towards fall cuisine; even though I know we could do a better job with better quality and yield this time of year, I'm not sure the effort would pencil out with increased sales.

We seem to have a bit more bandwidth for winter greens this year, but despite our best efforts, our first seeding of spinach is a bit lackluster. We are learning best rates with the Jang seeder, and seem to have some skips in the seeding. Also some die back from Pythium (?), and worst of all, an early bloom of chick weed in a house that hasn't been bad other years. Tempted to till it in and seed again but seems like the chickweed will jump right back, too and we will just lose several weeks of growth. We seem to pile all the other projects onto the fall too—solar installation, new storage sheds, and a head house. Clean up one mess, make a new one!

(Westminster Station) Crops are fantastic but deer damage is incredible. I hope people hunt.

(Starksboro) We've had a couple of frosts now and said goodbye (willingly) to field cukes, zucchini, beans and cherry tomatoes. Our tunnels are more than halfway transitioned from summer to winter crops, and we're waiting for another frost or two to start harvesting parsnips, Brussels sprouts, etc.

After talking to other winter growers we're trying to plant winter greens in smaller, more frequent successions this year. One technique that we hadn't used before is starting seeds on a single date, then transplanting them on two dates spaced 2-4 days apart. Apparently a couple of days of spacing in transplant time (vs date the seeds were started in the greenhouse) can translate to weeks between actual first harvest dates. We shall see.

Overall it was an incredible growing season, we think in part because of new cover cropping regimens. We're going to go to the cover cropping workshop coming up at Elmer Farm and are very much looking forward to some winter planning time to dial in more variety and better timing for future covers.

(Shrewsbury) Our high tunnels are mostly planted for the winter, with some spinach left to transplant and mustard greens left to seed. Early weed control can be tricky for us in densely seeded greens...we turn tomato beds over quickly to winter greens, but maybe we could benefit from taking out tomatoes earlier and leaving a couple weeks to flush the first round of seeds.

Fall storage vegetables are mostly looking good in the field but harvest will be delayed until our winter cold storage zones are done being used for drying hemp. It's rewarding to make multipurpose use of farm infrastructure, but it would also be nice to have space now to get our roots harvested and stored. My favorite cover crop on the farm now is a mix of forage radish and peas with some oats, seeded August 15th. Great soil coverage, really lush, and it will be easy to seed early in the spring. I was surprised to see no flea beetle damage on the radish leaves even though our farm has ample pressure in late August/early September.

It was great to stop work early and go to the VVBGA workshop at Mighty Food Farm on one of those beautiful days last week...it's such a treat to get to see how other farms do what they do!

(West Haven) Overall, we had a good second season growing mixed vegetables here in West Haven, pretty similar to last year. Major pests were Japanese beetles and leaf hoppers. The beetles damaged basil and munch on a lot of other crops. Leaf hoppers were mostly a problem on potatoes and beans. They killed Yukon Gold before they produced much. Becky came out to help us determine what killed the plants. I never saw leaf hopper take down plants so quick and thought it was late blight.

Our number one nutrient issue is the yellow shoulders (sunscald) on larger tomatoes. Our second nutrient problem was feeding enough magnesium. Following Becky's advice, we put K in the drip which helped some. Our number one fungus was PM. Early blight was not that bad until tomatoes were older.

Crops that yielded very well this season for us were sweet potatoes, melons, cherry tomatoes, cukes, summer and winter squash.

(Westminster West) End of September, and still wearing a T- shirt! Took a chance on seeding some fields with peas and oats mid-September, just emerging as it's been so dry here, but maybe they will do some good, the earlier fields I seeded look lush and thick!

Sold out yellow storage onions, sold out Walla-Wallas and started on the Sweet Expression onions, stores really like the sweet onions and it's been a great onion year. Leeks moving steady as all the winter squashes, early harvest end of August and half sold thru the crop already at decent prices. Every year we grow less Butternuts and more unusual types and that seems to work out well.

Gilfeather turnips have steady sales and it always amazes me that people buy turnips before Thanksgiving! Tomatoes still pumping out dollars from the grafted plants that just won't quit, Big Dena and assorted cherry toms.

Farmers' market sales about 25% ahead of last year, the entire farmers market has shown a steady growth in all categories. Wholesale about the same which is fine as we eliminated some crops and focusing on fewer more profitable (I hope!) crops. CBD hemp sales have been strong and it's a fun crop to watch grow as many other growers have mentioned to me! About a third harvested at this time and the rest this week. Fall raspberries petering out but still high quality, customers love them!

The only crop that was a disappointment this year was garlic strangely enough, I think bad winter weather, too wet, too cold, hard to know, but what did survive is very high quality. I have no extra to sell as seed garlic since black garlic production is consuming much of the crop. Clean up, harvest, preparing orders, all piling up this time of year but the weathers been great and looking forward to days of quiet solitude soon.

(Craftsbury) The end of the blueberry season means fall cleanup. We break down the gathering place, wash and store the pails, store the scale, check the machinery and do a slow mowing of the hillside noting trees damaged, aging, doing a rough prune of the obvious extraneous branches and appreciate the subtle and then emergent rich red of the blueberry bushes' fall foliage. We check out the various scat, noting a mix of carnivores and vegetarians and one omnivore black bear. People stop to view and take pictures and ask if there will be any more ripening. In a few short weeks, winter will relentlessly arrive. We continue thinking about the coming year, make our plans for changes or purchases and work projects. The leaves on the bushes, still bright red will contrast nicely with the whiteness of the hillside.

(South Hampton NH) "Second Spring" in full mode. Winter kale, spinach, chard, beet green, lettuce, choy, are all seeded and planted for the most part. More transplanting this week. Bed steaming starts this week for the direct seeded mixes and arugula. Root harvesters are dusted off and ready to go into storage mode. Looks like the cool down next week will help us not import field heat into our winter storage.

(Plainfield N) Weather of late has been stunningly beautiful as we close in on frost dates. Half of the crop of carrots binned up, beets remain in the field. Sweet potato harvest looks very strong, a bit large for wholesale, and hopefully we will move the rest through CSA's and institutions. About 25% through potato harvest, hoping the old harvester holds together because we are only able to dig evenings and the days are shortening. Fall squash and pumpkins binned, and a wonderfully clean crop it was for us. I would like to think that it was a result of timely fungicide applications along with great cultural conditions, but having talked to other growers, I believe it had less to do with what I did and more to do with the favorable weather conditions.

Still lots of tomatoes to harvest; cherry tomatoes continue in popularity and sales are good but harvest is a labor drain. Same with fall raspberries; I have kept on top of Botrytis and SWD. One year I missed proper timing and blew it so badly that there were "Wanted: Dead" posters of me hanging in the farmstand and packshed. Spraying for SWD is a fact of nature going forward for us, as we begin to see populations start to ramp up in the blues, and the warm days of early fall mandate keeping on top of them in the fall raspberries.

Last block of sweetcorn (Montauk and Providence) coming in now and should carry us quite a long time or until frost. Have avoided major CEW and FAW infestations in our corn due to paranoia and Heliothis traps. Sales are strong. We will suffer a bit from a smaller than usual carrot harvest for deep fall, coupled with a terrible year for storage onions. Lack of farmstand help after college students leave continues to be a problem, but we'll tough it out till the farmstand closes Columbus Day weekend. Getting fall covers on when ground opens up; from now on just rye will be applied.

(Argyle NY) We harvested winter squash and sweet potatoes, both now curing at 90 degrees. The 3 varieties of sweet potato had good yields from a 12" spacing; Covington still the best overall. We were part of a 2-year study using beneficial nematodes to control wireworms, which did little damage and were only found on the perimeters, so this seems effective. We have applied 2 types of native nematodes on our whole farm in the spring and we hope they control other insects. Grateful to the Elson Shields Lab in NY for their research.

Still picking tomatoes, beans, corn and peppers. Apples are in full production, and dropping. Alternaria on Brassicas but not on some new land we opened up. We need more long-term rotation ground.

Trying to get the cover crops seeded in as crops come out. Still irrigating, getting row covers out and waiting for our first frost. High tunnels being prepped for winter crops, with kale, chard, and Asian greens transplants going in tomorrow. Salad mix greens being seeded over next few days. Spinach tunnel will mostly be from transplants, with 12 varieties, planted as the tomatoes are ripped out. Markets have remained strong. It will be a busy few weeks with garlic to plant, temporary tunnels to build, fields to be put to bed, construction projects, and finding time to enjoy the autumn colors as well as sleep more!

UPDATE FROM THE UVM PLANT DIAGNOSTIC CLINIC

Ann Hazelrigg, Extension plant pathologist

With fogs and morning dews, leafspots may be increasing on beets, brassicas, carrots and other crops.

Tomatoes: Another season without late blight on tomatoes or potatoes! Received pictures of chilling injury on tomato fruit causing superficial browning.

Squash: I have received a few pictures of black rot on butternut squash. The fungus disease can cause distinctive circular ring patterns on the fruit. The fungus (*Didymella bryoniae*) also causes gummy stem blight on the leaves and stems of watermelon, cucumber, and cantaloupe.

<https://ag.umass.edu/vegetable/fact-sheets/cucurbits-black-rot>.

We received a buttercup squash with symptoms of edema-raised corky spots on the fruit. Several diseases can also cause these symptoms but those were ruled out after checking for fungi. Edema can occur on fruit when soil moisture is high and air temperatures are cool. The edema may be limited to the side of the fruit that is touching the soil.

http://vegetablemdonline.ppath.cornell.edu/DiagnosticKeys/CucurFrt/Other/Other_WntSq.htm

Many growers have been reporting squash vine borer in pumpkins and squash fruit. I had heard borers attacking fruit was common in dry years when the vines had died back, but the vines were healthy and intact so the borer was choosing the fruit. There is only one generation per year of the pest and it is active from mid-June through July. The moth lays eggs near the base of the plant and the larvae burrows into the stem, causing the plant to wilt and die. The larvae feed for 4-6 weeks, then burrow 1-2 inches in the soil to pupate, emerging next year. It is a tricky pest for organic growers. Row covers can be used during flights of the adult, but must be removed at flowering. <http://labs.russell.wisc.edu/vegento/pests/squash-vine-borer/>

Severe two spotted spider mite damage seen causing defoliation and russetting on Asian eggplant. Curled and twisted leaves of brassica seedlings showed broad mite infestation.

Have received a few garlic samples with *Fusarium* infections due to high humidity during drying. http://www.science.oregonstate.edu/bpp/Plant_Clinic/Garlic/Fusarium.pdf

As always, send a picture or a sample to the Plant Diagnostic Clinic, 63 Carrigan Drive, Burlington, VT 05405. ann.hazelrigg@uvm.edu

AG ENGINEERING TECH TIPS

Greens Washline from China: learn how this new washline was adapted by Jericho Settlers Farm to increase the efficiency of their packshed. The pros, the cons, and the cost all explained here: go.uvm.edu/washline

Washing Machine Greens Spinner Workshop. This event is an opportunity to bring your own washing machine and have help to get it converted into a greens spinner! November 1 in Unity, ME and November 19 in Randolph, VT. Find out more at: go.uvm.edu/spinnerworkshops

UPCOMING WORKSHOPS AND TRAININGS

October 1, 3-6:30 pm, Improving Soil Health: Mixed Vegetables and Cut Flowers at Elmer Farm, E. Middlebury VT. Farmers: free; Non-farmers: \$15 to cover cost of dinner.
<https://nofavt.org/events/exploring-practices-policies-improving-soil-health-series-middlebury>

October 16, 3-6 pm. Tunnel crops, wash/pack shed retrofit in old barn and more at Deep Meadow Farm, Windsor VT. VVBGA members free, \$10 others.

November 6, 2-5 pm. Off the grid, small-scale diversified vegetables and reduced tillage at Small Axe Farm, Barnet VT. VVBGA members free, \$10 others.

December 10-12. New England Vegetable and Fruit Conference and Trade Show. Manchester NH. <https://newenglandvfc.org/>

January 27, 2020. VVBGA Annual Meeting, Fairlee VT. Mark your calendars.