



Vermont Vegetable and Berry News – September 5, 2017

compiled by Vern Grubinger, University of Vermont Extension

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www.uvm.edu/vtvegandberry

UPCOMING EVENTS

Sept. 12. UMass Vegetable Program Research Tour. S. Deerfield MA. 4-7 pm.

<https://ag.umass.edu/vegetable/events/twilight-meeting-umass-vegetable-programs-research-tour-pest-roundtable>

Sept. 21. Cover Crop Trials at Cedar Circle Farm, E. Thetford VT. Free. 3-5 pm.

Sept. 25. Rotational No-till and Mulching Systems for Organic Vegetable Farms. Pine Island Community Farm, Colchester VT. 3:30-6:30. <http://bit.ly/Sept25NoTill>

Sept. 26. Ditto. Eveningsong Farm, Cuttingsville VT. <http://bit.ly/Sept26NoTill>

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>

Nov. 7-8. Produce Safety Alliance Grower Training. VYCC West Monitor Barn, Richmond, VT
Stay tuned for link to details and registration info.

Dec. 12-17. 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

(Richford) Our season's start with wholesale lettuce, cabbage and fennel went well. Kale had Swede midge damage by August. Winter squash looks dismal. This will be the worst year for our farm in a decade. But with the yield down so is the work load, which is something I need, being the primary labor source of the farm over the past 22 years.

(S. Royalton) My problem with Canada geese eliminated most of my early sweet corn. I am wondering if others are having similar problems? If so I would like to know so I can try to get Federal boys to start listening to grower concerns. Right now no one there will listen to me. When I'm back to Montpelier we could get them into committees for questioning and growers could also testify.

(Plainfield) My PYO berry production was down to about 60% of the last few years. Low. Then...SWD arrived. I probably still have 40 gallons on the plants. I put out cider vinegar in red cups with a drop of soap-and caught some. I asked pickers to "shake, stomp, shuffle" and shake off the soft berries, stomp on them and shuffle them. I am hoping for a cold winter, that knocked the SWD back in 2013. Many thanks to my pickers who weed and mulch and help maintain the place.

(Huntington) We had a light touch of frost last Saturday night, only in the low pockets of our lowest fields and not hard enough to do anything but burn a few leaves. Still, an unpleasant sight for Labor Day weekend. A month ago the field corn folks were saying we were 2 weeks behind in GDD. I doubt that has abated much, as all of our heat-loving field crops are a week or 2 behind, with time to make that up having either run out (squash) or running out fast (sweet potatoes).

On the other hand, potatoes are yielding very well, and we'll try to keep the greenhouse crops running a few weeks longer than usual to compensate for the lower anticipated yields on some of the other storage crops. Diseases did not turn out to be problematic after the wet June, though that was not left to fate and the sprayer was rarely dismantled June through August. Non-irrigated fall Brassicas look good, if a bit thirsty before the recent rains.

(Rochester) The fall raspberries are full of buds and setting fruit but they are ripening later than usual. Is that because of the cool weather this summer? Hopefully the first fall frost will be late enough for us to have a good harvest.

(Craftsbury) The battle with PM really took a toll on the greenhouse tomato yield this year. Spraying sulfur was very effective but it left a residue that took too much time to remove. I ended up using it to spray plants that hadn't fruited yet and then transitioned to using Stylet oil (after waiting two weeks). I'm not sure if it was the sprays or the fact that it was mid-summer but the PM finally receded, only for potato aphids to pop up. In the end I think it's down to timing and early detection. I think the PM would have been a lot easier to handle if we sprayed sulfur at the first moment we started seeing it back in May. Milstop had no effect.

(Westford) Lost cucumbers to frost Friday Aug. 29. They quit on the forecast. Damage to pumpkins and winter squash as well. Terrible Hornworm problems hunt for 45 minutes twice a day and cover the bottom of a 5 gal. pail.

(Westminster West) Earliest frost ever: Sept. 2! Just a kiss from Jack Frost and nothing was lost. Started harvesting some winter squash; Delicata, Kuri and Sunshine. Butternuts not quite ready, another few days. Pumpkins showing color and next week should be a busy harvest time. About 1/3 harvested from the main onion field with Patterson and the rest really putting on size in the last 10 days. Shallots look good as well as awesome Megaton leeks!

Tunnel raspberries yielding well, no SWD at this point, spider mites not a problem after two releases of predators. Still toms in tunnels with the late rows looking nice, no disease. People really love the Indigo Drops. No CPB on the spuds and no leafhoppers! Planting late has its advantages.

Sweet potatoes running late due to late planting but vines look very healthy. Cover crops coming up well and I have sworn off winter rye! Preparing land for garlic today ahead of the rains expected, best garlic crop this year in a long while. Sales at farmers' market ahead of last year and wholesale holding its own despite increased competition. Late carrots and roots looking clean, bring on the fall!

(Orwell) Cool nights and the arrival of field tomatoes at our markets has slowed down our pace a bit. Despite what we thought was plenty of potassium applied early in the season, we are just beginning to see what we suspect is potassium deficiency in our later fruits. We must remember to sidedress adequately before it is too late next year.

Also taking to heart the need for warmth in the tunnels at night during summers like this—ripening and flavor are so much better in our house with automatic ventilation compared to the houses where we sometimes neglect to roll down the sides in time for the cool evenings. Hoping that slower ripening may mean more fruit for later markets.

Final note is the familiar struggle with reliable (seasonal) farm help in a rural location. Seems to be the biggest barrier we have to growing our business.

(S. Burlington) Weather for the last month has been treating us and the soil rather well here. Great garlic harvest, though heavy rains and cool weather made them take longer than usual to dry. Powdery mildew on the monarda fistulosa and didyma (lavender and scarlet bee balm). They are pretty susceptible. Ashwagandha looks luscious but is flowering later than last year...hoping the root will have time to bulk up.

Interns this year are SO amazing! Hard workers and thirst for knowledge makes the work more fun for everyone. Giving herbal plant walks to subsidize income, which is fun and lucrative. Considering capacity for next year and crop planning already. Planning to upgrade value-added and labels over the winter. September plans: build garlic beds, harvest medicinal leaves and roots, final flower harvests and enjoy the changing colors. Bringing in the harvest and the gratitude!

(Burlington) Cool weather has been a boon for our spinach and broccoli, but warm weather crops are suffering. So much *Alternaria* and *Anthraco* in our cantaloupe and watermelon this year it is unreal. Never this bad before. The silver lining is that despite losing foliage early, the Divergent cantaloupe mostly held their flavor, at least much better than other cultivars in other seasons.

Suffering through terrible powdery mildew in our tunnel tomatoes, seemingly unaffected by potassium bicarbonate. Noticeably less infection in the more standard greenhouse types than those greenhouse cultivars with more heirloom parentage. Crossing our fingers that our potatoes planted on July 8th to make up for crop lost to flooding will produce tubers in time. Plants look good; just waiting for tubers.

(Plainfield NH) College kids are gone and the long slog is ahead, lost 2 good folks from the farm stand and 2 more from the field crew. Saw our future this past week when fieldies were out with hoddies, full rain gear and wool caps. A lot of huddling around the coffee pot.

Burning down potato tops but leaving the Russetts to bulk up a bit. Onion harvest underway with a crop that appears smaller than normal. Tops were healthy to the end, but they were set back in the spring with the long spell of cold and dampness, so size is down. Cooler than normal weather has really set back ripening in the fall raspberries, we normally would be cranking by Labor day but this year it's pretty slim pickings.

Have done a pretty good job of keeping the PM off the fall cucurbits, *Alternaria* on the spuds and field tomatoes. Haven't strategized what the spray protection program is going to look like for the next week as the weather looks to be all over the place, with lots of southern-pumped moisture. SWD not a big problem as there is no ripe fruit around at the moment. Sales have been good.

(Argyle NY) All in all it will be an average year. Started out dry with irrigation in April, wet in May, June, and July. Then irrigating a lot in August. No cucumber beetles, very little flea beetles, and leafhoppers and diseases were minimal. Markets were slow in the beginning but picked up speed in August.

We are down to a skeleton crew which is what I run all winter but at this point they are being pushed to hold it up at this time of year. Lost the late half of blueberries to SWD. This happened the first year they were around but not since.

Went to the Berry Patch Farm workshop and learned about netting for next year. We have to replace our bird netting any way so we will be ready for next year. We got a lot of winter rye down before these rains. This month we will be getting winter tunnels ready and bringing in sweet potatoes and winter squash.

(Little Compton RI) We took over a hay field which was also winter forage for a local beef operation. It has been over a year getting it straightened out nutritionally. Last week we put in some fall greens. As the Arugula was coming up, I noticed a lot of Jimson weed seedlings--this is a very poisonous plant! If you are working a field that had cows grazing poor quality hay be aware of this weed, as its seed can last several years in the soil.

Onions were field dried (not recommended) and now in storage bins. Winter Squash looks good but powdery mildew starting to creep in and put a lid on production. We are tightening up the space between our plastic winter squash production. And working out the timing to keep the sides of the plastic clean up to the last minute before they start to run. We built a super aggressive rear cultivator with rear shoulders which will allow us to utilize the giant covering disc from our Rain-Flo mulch layer to add just enough soil to keep the sides of the plastic clean. So closer spacing between plastic beds just makes sense. We are also doing four plantings of Delicata, so we can have a longer storage horizon that will get us to Xmas. So far a crop is coming in good. Now if hurricane Irma can just magically disappear we will have a great fall.

NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT UPDATES

Becky Maden, UVM Extension

Fall is an ideal time to take soil tests and get started on nutrient management planning for next season, both to optimize next year's crops and also to comply with Vermont's new Required Agricultural Practices. RAPs require all commercial vegetable and berry producers to test their soils at least every 5 years, follow the recommendations (from a lab using the same extract as UVM), and keep records of all forms of nutrients applied to the soil. The largest farms, with over 50 acres of cropland, will also need a comprehensive nutrient management plan.

The end of the 2017 season is also a good time to make note of soil management successes and areas needing improvement, based on this year's crop performance, while it is fresh in your mind.

And if you haven't yet recorded applications of soil amendments (including compost and manure) made this season, now is the time. Templates and planning document are available at <http://www.uvm.edu/vtvegandberry/NMPlinks.html>.

Stay tuned for an Extension/VVGBA web platform dedicated to storing your soil test results, fertilizer records, and nutrient management plans. It will be released for testing this winter. If you'd like assistance with any aspect of vegetable nutrient management, contact Rebecca Maden@uvm.edu or call 802-773-3349 x277

For questions regarding the RAPs, contact the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets. AGR.WaterQuality@state.vt.us