



Vermont Vegetable and Berry News – January 2, 2025

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<https://www.uvm.edu/extension/horticulture/commercial>

JANUARY 8 IS THE DEADLINE FOR EASY-TO-GET USDA MONEY

If you grow any type of specialty crop (fruit, vegetables, ornamentals, herbs, maple, etc.) do not miss this opportunity! This program is simply a payment based on a percentage of your 2023 or 2024 sales. Payments are estimated to be in the range of 2 to 11 percent of gross sales, depending on the number of applications nationwide. A total of \$2 billion is available.

Though the program is titled Marketing Assistance for Specialty Crops, it does not require a marketing plan or that you spend the funds on marketing. It is intended to compensate producers for the high costs of production in recent years.

To apply:

- 1) Fill out the simple two-page [FSA form 1140](#) stating your 2023 or 2024 sales of [specialty crops](#). New producers can apply for this program but [it is a little more complicated](#).
- 2) Get the form to your local USDA service center. Calling ahead is a good idea to make sure someone is available to accept your form or to get instructions for mailing in your form. Vermont farms, here are your [service centers](#). Out-of-state farms: see [USDA service center locator](#).
- 3) Be ready to provide documentation of your sales (spreadsheet, etc.). There may also be more paperwork to get set up with USDA or confirm your eligibility, but don't let this deter you. Your USDA service center can help with this.

More info is on the [Marketing Assistance for Specialty Crops \(MASC\) website](#). A [video](#) from NY-FSA about MASC (20 minutes describing the program followed by Q& A). If you would like assistance understanding how to apply, contact Julie.Callahan@uvm.edu

2025 VVBGA ANNUAL MEETING TUESDAY JANUARY 28

This event is at the DoubleTree Hotel in S. Burlington. The fee is \$65 per VVBGA member (\$75 non-member) including breakfast snacks and a good lunch. The program has a dozen presentations on: engineering tips, flooding, IPM, labor, profitability, blueberry and strawberry production, and more. Over 30 trade show exhibitors include compost, greenhouse, insurance, packaging, and seed companies.

To view the program, exhibitors, and registration details see <https://go.uvm.edu/vvbg2025>.

Pre-registration closes on January 23. At the door, add \$10 per person.

Thanks to our sponsors who help keep the annual meeting fees low!



VVBGA MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

To renew or join, go to <https://vvbga.org> and log in to your VVBGA account or create a new account. Dues are \$75 per farm for calendar year 2025. If this fee is a barrier to participation, a lower payment can be selected, no questions asked.

Commercial membership in the VVBGA is \$125 per company or organization. Go to: <https://vvbga.org/commercial-membership>. If you want an ad in the 2025 annual meeting booklet, or an exhibit table in the trade show, act now!

CROP MANAGEMENT GUIDES FOR OUR REGION

Vegetable Management Guide. <https://nevegetable.org/>

Small Fruit Management Guide. <https://ag.umass.edu/fruit/ne-small-fruit-management-guide>

Strawberry Production Guide. <https://scholars.unh.edu/extension/1670/>

Tree Fruit Management Guide. <https://netreefruit.org/>

Floriculture Management Guide. <https://www.negreenhouse.org/pest-guides.html> (\$43)

OPTIMIZE YOUR HIGH TUNNEL PRODUCTION

Don't fly blind when feeding your tunnel crops! This fact sheet explains how to soil sample and test soil fertility for in-ground crops like tomatoes.

<https://www.uvm.edu/~htunnel/factsheets/SoilSamplingHighTunnelsBeckyMaden.pdf>.

For established high tunnels growing in the ground we recommend the University of Maine Soil Test Lab's "Long Term Combined High Tunnel Package" The cost is \$30 per sample and results include the Basic High Tunnel Test PLUS Saturated Media Extract for all major and micronutrients. Together, these two tests assess season-long nutrient availability and short-term nutrient intensity. Go to <https://umaine.edu/soiltestinglab/> for more information.

For an overview of types of tests available, their cost, and where to send samples to assess soil, tissue, compost and water, see:
https://www.uvm.edu/vtvegandberry/factsheets/Testing_Soil_Plant_Compost_Water_Quality.pdf

Missed these 22 tips for improving tunnel production? Check them out at
<https://www.uvm.edu/vtvegandberry/factsheets/OptimizingHighTunnelProduction.pdf>

POST HARVEST AND PACKSHED INFORMATION

If you are planning to make improvements of any kind to your post harvest operations, be sure to check out the resources on the UVM Extension Agricultural Engineering blog at
<https://blog.uvm.edu/cwcallah/post-harvest/>

STRAWBERRY GROWER SURVEY

Vermont is experiencing an increase in precipitation, extreme weather events, and seasonably warmer winters. With this, growers are experiencing more severe pests and disease outbreaks. UVM Extension's Northwest Crops and Soils Team (NWCST) has received a Specialty Crop Block Grant from the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food, and Markets to understand disease and pest pressure in strawberry production fields. We hope you can inform our research team on issues you have been facing with your strawberry crops. With this information NWCST will be able to prioritize/focus our research and extension efforts on strawberry pest management. Please take a moment to complete this strawberry pest and disease management survey at:
https://qualtrics.uvm.edu/jfe/form/SV_3IqfIOMK212rmmy. Questions? Kellie Damann, Research Specialist, kellie.damann@uvm.edu

FARM SUCCESSION PLANNING WEBINAR SERIES. Thursdays, January 9 to January 30 from 11:00 to 1:00.

This is a free, live webinar series for **transitioning farmers and junior-generation farmers** to learn the basics of succession planning, including how to get started, where to find advisors and additional resources, ask questions, and get help. All generations, including family and non-family members, who may play a role in the farm's future are encouraged to attend. Farmers from across New England are welcome! Instructors include Land For Good staff Mike Ghia, Vermont Field Agent, a guest attorney, and a financial specialist. [Register here](#)

TRI-STATE GREENHOUSE IPM ONLINE WORKSHOP. Thursdays, January 23 and January 30 from 1:00 to 3:30.

This is a two-part workshop for Northeast growers. Topics include management of powdery mildew, thrips and aphids, and IPM practices. View the agenda [here](#), and [register here](#). \$50 per person. Questions? Cheryl Sullivan, cfrank@uvm.edu or (802) 656-5434.

NOFA-VT WINTER CONFERENCE FEBRUARY 15-16

This event will be held at UVM in Burlington. Stay tuned for program information soon at <https://www.nofavt.org/events/nofa-vt-winter-conference>