



VERMONT VEGETABLE AND BERRY GROWER NEWS – April 1, 2022

Compiled by Vern Grubinger, University of Vermont Extension

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

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REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

(Barnet) Our high tunnels are full of direct seeded mustard greens and spinach as well as Paperpot radish, salad turnips, cilantro, claytonia, lettuce, spinach, bok choy and radish. We spent the cold snap triple covering in our unheated tunnels. Everything did well and is now ready for the upcoming warm weather. Tomato grafts look great and tons of Paperpot trays are planted and growing for field planting.

We have field greens up that were seeded last week and silage tarped for germination. We transitioned those to row cover and are pleased with the germination. Battling a pretty bad mud season. Taking the longer paved route on delivery days.

(Westminster) Our greenhouses are bursting with transplants so with luck it won't be too long before the fields dry out. Then we'll be spreading manure and compost and plowing and harrowing. Green, red and lacinata kale, and lettuce – red and green leaf, romaine and buttercrunch lettuce, and collards will be the first to be planted. We usually start transplanting mid-April, so we're pretty much on time.

We're planning on the same crop mix as last year, except no celeriac and less broccoli – both had disease problems. We are planting more root crops because our new packing line is running very efficiently; it still requires the same number of workers to run it, but we can move more produce through it.

We're still selling carrots, black radish, and purple daikon from last year; that helps with cash flow this time of year. We hope fuel prices will start easing, but we did fill our off-road diesel tanks just as prices started to rise, so that helped. There aren't many local people applying for work and we're looking for more. Looks like we'll be more dependent than ever on H-2A employees.

(Guildhall) Not too much to report this month. Potato sales continue steady, with some varieties finally selling out (golds, yellows, and reds). We've got 250,000 lbs. left in storage, hopefully will get it all moved soon. Spring comes slow; will be a while yet before we're on the ground.

(Westminster West) Garlic is up and we removed two layers of remay covering the field. Some tipburn from cold damage, it was an extremely cold winter. Mud season was the worst since last mud season! Busy in the propagation house, transplanting celery, tomatoes etc. Ran a soil test on the potting mix, very acid this year so adding some pulverized lime in the mixer. Lucky, I filled all heating tanks last fall so haven't had to deal with fuel costs yet, but that will happen soon.

One of the tunnels has a high salt content in soil, trying to mitigate that with soaking water and a lot of peat added to the beds. Next summer we will remove the plastic for the rain to really flush it out. Field are slowly greening with the winter rye while the fields that were planted with oats and peas last summer are a nice thick cover of dried golden residue, ready to till and plant soon. Happy spring!

(Hinesburg) Greens growing and selling well. Spinach and Claytonia with a few others coming on. Piecing together the markets for the product so far so good this spring. Some restaurants have fallen off ordering and others have emerged. Farmstand opens today. CSA starts in another week. Crew is great. Juggling projects with the changing weather.

(Elmore) High tunnel is heating up. First red currant bushes are being propagated as hardwood cuttings in the high tunnel beds. Forsythia blooming in the high tunnel. Covering the beds with cardboard so the weeds will not get light and hoping to plant spinach and Chinese cabbages soon in the high tunnel.

Outdoors the ice and snow are still treacherous to walk on, and we can only wait, as it was 12 degrees yesterday and only warmed up to 15. Elmore is known for its cold and we used to have northern dog sled races here in the spring as it was the last place that would still have snow.

Pruned many large apple trees. Collected scionwood from our best trees for three hours the last sunny day we had. Lots of nice buds on the fruit trees, including paw paws. Got to keep the rare and best pear trees going! We name them after the towns in Vermont where they were discovered. Hoping for some good crops of exotics. Being a pioneer is one of the most satisfying things we do on the farm.

(Pownal) My wife and I have finished pruning all of our main crops of blueberries and raspberries. Big job for just two people but enjoyed being able to be outside and seeing our two English Setters being able to patrol the rows once again. All brush has been loaded up and carried away to be burned at some point. Soil samples have been sent in to UVM lab and waiting for results. This step should have been done last fall before the ground froze but workflow did not work out so well. So we have our fertilizer stored in the barn waiting on the results of soil test to guide us.

Our stockpiled mulch chips are still frozen so when the sun and warmer temps help us we will start spreading. Seems like spring start up requires lots of labor and time. And sometime between berry work the two large gardens will need plowing and tilling in the winter rye crop. We sure have noticed the price increases this past year on everything from fertilizer to garden seeds even berry baskets. The increase cost probably will require our price for berries to go up this year, which is something we do not want to do. Also, in this spring we have 100 more raspberries ordered for pick up in early May. Planting should go smoothly if weather cooperates.

All this enjoyment to be shared after 52 years of marriage, working side by side. We are lucky with good health and the desire to farm in our retirement years.

(Salisbury NH) The battle of the voles begins. Transplanted some nice spinach into hoop house. Two days later most was eaten. Set lots of snap traps along runways and holes. Getting a vole a day but not sure if that will solve the problem. The transplanted chard and beets melted down with the cold temperatures. No row cover used so not surprised. Have direct seeded spinach, chard, beets, radishes, lettuce in unheated hoop houses. Arugula in unheated hoop houses survived and is growing. Probably will bolt soon but might get a cutting or two.

Wildly fluctuating temps make it hard to stay motivated. We use hoses to water and need to drain them in this cold weather. One hoop house had a lot of weeds (not yet identified) that harbored tons of cut worms. Chickens enjoyed the feast but what a chore getting rid of weeds and worms! Going to mostly use no-till this year even though we might have to worry about jumping worms. Getting spooked about any off-farm plant purchases (as a source of jumping worms). Ordering only bare root plants and growing our own starts. It will be interesting to see how customers react to pricing since they are already complaining about their weekly grocery bill.

(Argyle NY) This has been a great warm spring that has brought us out of a lackluster winter growing time. Over the last few weeks the greens in the tunnels are exploding along with planting new greens. Very little diseases or insects. First year without aphids!! As we slow this farm down, we are going to utilize our greenhouse and tunnels more and plant less in the field. Our tunnels will have all or most of our celery, tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, basil, peas, and cucumbers.

We seeded/transplanted peas in the tunnel for our first planting; and the celery in pots in the greenhouse are producing small bunches for sale as we wait for space to transplant new plants in the tunnel. We continue to trial new things so stay tuned!

Our marketing through online sales will continue but with a farmer's market thrown in along with some wholesale to soak up excesses, and the ability to buy/sell for online customers has great advantages. We are excited to have what is lining up to be a good crew.

(Plainfield NH) We have been busy trying to line up labor and transplanting in the greenhouses. Trucking and supply continue to be very challenging and will be so in the future. Waiting for delivery of backordered plastic pots for the ornamentals, row crop fertilizer, and related amendments. We are also getting a late start on some projects like bringing ag water onto our field in Windsor and replacing a cooler at the farmstand that was working on rotting itself through the floor.

Fields are drying up nicely and a few tentative ventures out into the drier areas to spread soil amendments has commenced. Up in the greenhouses I am battling aphids and Two-Spotted Spider Mite on some stock plants, trying to keep the infestation from spreading out to other houses. I am depend on beneficials to do the heavy lifting at this point (hopefully) but I had to use some bio rational and conventional products to get things knocked down to a level that I thought the beneficials could maintain. No matter how hard you try in the dead of winter, enough bad guys lurk in the stock plants to blossom into an infestation in early March.

The bare ground this early is concerning if it is coupled with dry weather, conditions that we had last year. That led to some nasty brush fires in the area, and for a troubling dry planting season. The solution to this dilemma is to keep our fingers crossed.

VVBGA SPRING WEBINARS ARE POSTED

You can view these webinars, and many more from previous years, on the [VVBGA YouTube Channel](#). This spring the topics were:

February 3. Farm First: Vermont's resource for farmers and their families managing stress. Leanne Porter, Farm First and Valerie Woodhouse, Honey Field Farm.

February 10. Economic value of wild pollinators to blueberry farms: research and grower perspectives with Rachel Gray, Owl's Head Blueberry Farm and Dr. Taylor Ricketts, UVM.

February 17. Promoting pollinator vigor in cut flower production. Karen Trubitt, True Love Farm and Dr. Lynn Adler, University of Massachusetts.

February 24. Pollinator habitat plantings – what growers are doing, NRCS funding, Dan Pratt, Astarte Farm and Tom Akin, NRCS-Vermont.

March 3. Invasive Pests to Keep an Eye On: Spotted Lanternfly and Jumping Worms. Judy Rosovsky, VT State Entomologist and Dr. Josef Görres, UVM Dept. of Plant and Soil Science.

March 10. High Tunnel Tomato Roundtable. With Becky Maden, UVM Extension; Gerard Croziet, Berry Creek Farm; Ryan Demarest, Naked Acre Farm.

March 17. Mindful Employee Management: Hans Estrin, UVM Extension and Lisa MacDougall, Mighty Food Farm.

March 24. Getting Ready for the 2022 Blueberry Season - grower round table with Ben Waterman, Waterman Orchards in Johnson, Vermont.

LAST CALL - SIGN UP FOR CAPS 2022 PRODUCE SAFETY ACCREDITATION

Community Accreditation for Produce Safety (CAPS) is the Vermont Vegetable and Berry Grower Association's unique program, designed by growers and administered by UVM Extension. Learn more at: <https://practicalproducesafetyvt.wordpress.com/>. If you have not yet been a part of the CAPS community, check it out. **You have until April 15 to enroll this year.**

CAPS is in its 8th year. It started with 22 farms; last year 153 farms in 6 states and Quebec earned CAPS accreditation by writing or updating their farm's produce safety plan, using the on-line prompts. Plans get reviewed and approved by a panel of farmers and ag service providers. After that, farms upload straightforward information to show they implemented their plan.

You can use the CAPS site to write a plan, without getting accredited, if you prefer. Either way, CAPS can help you reduce risk, improve efficiency, and reinforce customer confidence in your products. To access the CAPS program, you must be a VVBGA member (\$70 per farm per year). The additional accreditation fee is only \$100, thanks to financial support from grants and gifts. Reduced fees are available upon request, no questions asked.

To join the VVBGA and enroll in CAPS, go to: <https://vvbga.org>. Questions? Contact Hans Estrin at hestrin@uvm.edu or 802-380-2109.

NEW RESOURCES FROM THE UVM EXTENSION AG ENGINEERING TEAM

Andy Chamberlin and Chris Callahan

New Episodes from The Ag Engineering Podcast

Advice for Young Farmers: EP66

Precision Planting with the MaterMacc Vacuum Seeder: EP67

Walking & Talking about Cover Crops, Greenhouse Tools & Bale Shredders: EP68

<https://agengpodcast.com>

New Videos

Easy to Clean Perforated Scoop for Salad Greens

https://youtu.be/RL_OoMbo7p8

Rain-Flo Plastic Mulch Layer Explained

<https://youtu.be/yAB1z2Ey8TI>

A Look at A Round Bale Shredder for Mulching Strawberries

<https://youtu.be/KwxIjAyayHU>

Antique Flat Filler for Greenhouse Production

<https://youtu.be/shD4u9hvnLw>

PEST MANAGEMENT RESEARCH UPDATES

Scott Lewins and Vic Izzo, UVM

It's spring and despite the remnants of snow, many of us are deep into seeding and planning for the upcoming growing season. What better way to warm up from one of coldest Januarys on record than with an update on our latest pest management projects! Check out our research update at <https://go.uvm.edu/vepart2021> with results from these research projects:

- Pre- and Post-Harvest Strategies for leek moth Control on Diversified Vegetable Farms
- Cultural and biological control tactics for the management of wireworms in root crops
- Evaluation of swede midge tolerance and resistance among four popular kale varieties
- Vermont Pest Scouting and Monitoring Program