



Vermont Vegetable and Berry News – June 7, 2016
compiled by Vern Grubinger, University of Vermont Extension
(802) 257-7967 ext. 303, vernon.grubinger@uvm.edu
www.uvm.edu/vtvegandberry

REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

(Charlotte) Recent rain helped; crops and weeds are really growing. Most crops are in the ground; sweet potatoes and successions left at this point. Can't figure out why field peas are struggling. My best guess is they don't like our heavy clay and dry weather. Maybe time to move on from them anyway. Seeing lots of flowers and fruit on strawberries, they're not far away. Suckering and trellising hoop house cukes and tomatoes regularly. Haven't seen leek moth evidence yet but we've had it every season since 2012 and will be ready with Entrust when it comes. So far just flea beetles but the others can't be far behind.

(Berlin) Perfect Circle Farm. The lack of rain and high heat is making it difficult with fruit tree and berry planting. Blueberries had great weather for flowering. Honeyberry is 2 weeks ahead of last year on fruiting, and should be ripe in a week or so. The no-snow winter made for tremendous damage in plants above ground in pots. Lost many things that are usually no problem, including apples, pears, plums, cherries, walnut, hickory. Lost some stock plants that had been out all winter in pots for 5 years and never showed any damage before. Many of the plants leafed out and flowered, only to fade away, suggesting roots were killed, while the tops were fine.

(Newbury) Peas, favas and peppers are blooming and tomatoes are close. Potatoes are looking good. Lots of ticks here.

(Hinesburg) Leaf miners are thick again this year. Covering spinach, beets, chard with ProTeknet is working well. I learned I need to cover seedlings in seedling house, too. Found one leek moth chew mark on garlic so far.

(Waterbury Center) Strawberries looking and tasting good. Not much disease perhaps because of nice dry conditions coupled with a fall planting of plugs instead of a spring bare root planting. Production seems to be down however. Garlic happy to get the rain we got Sunday. Blueberries and raspberries looking healthy, no frost to affect blueberry flowers is a blessing.

(Monkton) The Last Resort. We had 1.6" rain late last week that saved many plants and our sanity. Strawberries are ripening early with more TPB injury than I've ever seen this early, but the crop looks excellent and we open for PYO this week. Asparagus crop has been good but, again, beetle presence more than last year. The mild winter was kind to overwintering insects. Leek moth pupae noted in garlic field. Having unusual difficulty finding good help this year but those we have are amazingly wonderful. We are celebrating 30 years on this farm June 19th 12-2 with a NOFA-VT pizza social and Lulu 's ice cream. Everyone invited.

(Rochester) We avoided spring frost damage to the blueberries this season helped by cool weather in April and May, which kept the blooms from developing too early.

(Shrewsbury) Our soil pH has continued to stay in the upper 5s even after multiple lime applications, so this year we started amending our soil with wood ash at 4 tons/acre. We've gotten excellent response from our early greens, so I'm optimistic to see how the rest of our crops respond. The past couple weeks of hot weather has made it easy to get good early weed control with our tine weeder, except for the areas where we're still dealing with bindweed.

(Shaftsbury) We have been using Biolink adjuvant (spray sticker) with our organic sprays for a number of years and I was just researching to see if there is something else to use that might be better. I came across a nifty power point from Univ. of CA Davis that talks about the importance of spray stickers to extending and improving the efficacy of organic sprays in the field. It also refers to enhanced effectiveness with tank mixing certain sprays. In particular using Azadirectin products with other sprays. Here is the link to the power point:

http://www.vineyardteam.org/files/resources/Corin%20Pease_Organic%20Alternatives.pdf

(Proctorsville) Hot, dry conditions and lack of normal winter temps have allowed flea beetle and cucumber beetle populations to explode in the high tunnel already. Weeds have been challenging to suppress since March, when you have a team of only 3 anyways. Plants are growing fabulously now though with these temps, just tricky to maintain.

(Plainfield NH) First flush of striped cucumber beetle dealt with; flea beetles somewhat subdued this year. Remains very dry here and irrigating a good deal, enough to stimulate the flush of weeds, anyway. Greenhouse sales have been strong, but got off to a late start, so profitability will depend how long it continues. Trying to clean up weeds in brambles and blues after neglecting them last year. The solution was to hire more bodies. Winter kill again on both crops, so will go back in and prune out wood that didn't leaf out before harvest. Some brambles have crossed the un-hardiness line and will be rogued out after harvest to be planted.

Crops look good, weed control pretty fair. Matted row strawberries came through winter well, plants look good going into harvest which will begin sometime this week. Weather has been good for low incidence of disease, keeping our fingers crossed for the next 5 weeks.

(Westminster West) We received 2" of rain on Sunday which we really needed and saw an immediate growth spurt on Monday morning and 2 acres of happy winter squash transplants that we set out Friday. This is always a stressful time of the year for us as we are still super busy shipping veggie and herb starts to our wholesale accounts thruout New England, while at the same time trying to get our own vegetable fields planted in spite of the quirky weather. But, somehow we muddle thru and both sides of the business seem to be doing ok. This year's garlic crop looks vastly larger than last year; much thicker stalks which should mean larger bulbs. Keeping the field cultivated and top dressing and dripping nutrients almost weekly. Scape harvest by this weekend. Onions on both the white and black mulches seem about equal growth wise at this point. Tomato tunnels setting lots of fruit and healthy plants at this point. Hoping I don't jinx things but no thrips at this point. Raspberries look great and no spider mites or white flies either. Aphids are almost non-existent and no diseases found on any crops indoor or out. Had a field that I planted late last year to peas and oats finally germinated this spring and plowed in a huge crop of growth for the pumpkins, never thought the seeds would remain viable like that but there you go! Farmers' market sales are about equal to last year, maybe a bit ahead as is the business overall compared to last year. Still seeding custom veggie plugs for other growers and looking forward to a weekend getaway so the domestic situation remains happy!

(Ange-Gardien, Quebec) Finally rain. Transplantation is going well. Could receive sweet potatoes slips earlier. I really need to think about doing my own slips. No sign of insects in garlic. hoophouse sales still very strong. Harvested beets and will harvest beans and carrots next week. Have to decide to put a new greenhouse or develop a on farm sale point. Probably try to do 3/4 of both. Reflexion of the light and extra heat to the rows beside the greenhouse get really make a difference. Cantaloupe there almost flowering. Forage is getting ready for interrow mulching. Keep melon clean, add organic matter and prevent weeds + keep moisture. Behind on weeding but dry spring helped a lot.

(Argyle, NY) Pleasant Valley Farm. Despite variable weather most spring crops have done well, especially over-wintered onions; they are very large. Harvest started last week and they sell for \$2 each retail. We have red and white, with 6 trial whites we will compare, and we have an experiment going on with beneficials to control thrips. Updates next time. The high tunnels are converted to summer crops except one which is cleared out and ready for a cover crop. Our Chandler strawberries are giving amazing yields from the plugs we grew from tips last August.

Markets have been very strong but we could use a bigger labor team. We are involved in a non-profit project to acquire a large farm to benefit the greater community of Saratoga Springs NY. The fundraising campaign has started and our first big event is at the Pitney Farm June 26, from 5-7 pm. Check out www.pitneymeadowscommunityfarm.org it will be a great resource.

(Little Compton RI) This is the time of the season when I put extra effort into all our Allium crops. Garlic scapes have become one of the most profitable value-added items we make each year, so we look forward to getting that extra cash while helping the bulb size. But I have been fuzzy about just how to manage it so I called Doug Bowne and Ed Frasier to get the low down. Both agree never "pull" the scape out of the center of the whorl! This leads to infection and many problems. Doug is solely a garlic seed grower, so he believes that pinching the scape just an inch behind the seed pod gives him more green matter to send more energy into the final bulb size. He said he has done a two-year study and sees a measurable effect. Ed Frasier believes this is a minimal boost to bulb expansion and opines that getting the early scape cash outweighs any later return on slightly bigger bulbs. Lastly, you want to snap off the scapes before the seed pod starts to swell. The later you wait the better chance the scape will start building lignins, hardening the stalk which is not appetizing to consumers.

This year we tried the Elliot Coleman tool for planting our Leeks. It is a 10" long 1" wide pipe that makes a nice hole which you just drop the leek into. This great idea guarantees you will have a pure white tip on all your leeks. I think Clara Coleman has a photo of it on her website. The only problem with this scenario was that the black birds came along the next day and pulled 20% of them up thinking they were sprouting corn! We are getting beneficial nematodes from ARBICO Organics for controlling corn seed maggot. We are still fighting powdery mildew in our tomato houses, pushing back with Oxidate followed immediately with Milstop.

REQUIRED AG PRACTICES (RAPS) RULE HEARINGS – and your last chance to comment

A public comment period on the Proposed Rule will be open until July 7, with five public hearings from 12:30-3:30 p.m. in these towns: St. Albans 6/21, Brandon 6/22, South Royalton 6/23, Newport 6/28 and Brattleboro 6/29. For locations and times see: <http://agriculture.vermont.gov/water-quality/news-events/public-meetings> and here is all the RAPS info: <http://agriculture.vermont.gov/water-quality/regulations/rap>.

Submit comments by email to AGR.RAP@vermont.gov or in writing to: Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food, and Markets. Attn: RAPS. 116 State St., Montpelier VT 05620-2901

WHERE ARE WE WITH FSMA?

The 'Produce Rule' of the Food Safety Modernization Act went into effect this past January. The vast majority of Vermont's vegetable and fruit farms will either be 'not covered' or have a 'qualified exemption' from compliance with that rule. A farm is not covered if annual sales of produce are less than \$25,000. A farm is exempt if annual sales of all food are less than \$500,000, and at least half those sales are to 'qualified end users' i.e. direct to the consumer or direct to entities that sell directly to consumers, and those sales are within 275 miles or within the state. The Vermont Agency of Agriculture estimates that 500 produce farms will not be covered by FSMA and another 400 farms will have a qualified exemption. Only 150 farms, or about 14% of all produce farms in Vermont, will be fully covered by the requirements of the Produce Rule. However, all farms should keep accurate records ASAP of both produce and food sales, by market type, in order to determine (prove) which category they fall into. Sales are based on a 3-year rolling average.

The Produce Rule sets standards for: personnel qualifications and training; health and hygiene; agricultural water; soil amendments of animal origin; domesticated and wild animals; growing, harvesting, packing, and holding activities; equipment, tools, and buildings; and recordkeeping. Compliance timeline: Farms grossing under \$250,000 in annual produce sales must comply by January 2020. Farms grossing under \$500,000 in produce sales must comply by January 2019. Farms grossing over \$500,000 must comply by January 2018. All categories have two extra years to comply with the agriculture water standard.

The National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition has more info on the Produce Rule: <http://sustainableagriculture.net/blog/produce-rule-analysis-part-1/> and so does FDA of course: <http://www.fda.gov/Food/GuidanceRegulation/FSMA/ucm334114.htm>

MULTI-STATE HIGH TUNNEL RESEARCH PROJECT NEEDS YOUR INPUT

As part of our new Northeast SARE project "Improving nutrient and pest management in high tunnel production" we want to learn more about the practices used and challenges faced by growers using high tunnels. Help us understand your needs by responding to our survey, at: https://unh.az1.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_5sZDRnBReS9vxNH. Your responses are crucial to help us design the best possible research and outreach programs. We know that it is a very busy time for growers, so we have done our best to keep the survey short! All responses are confidential. We appreciate your time and input -Becky Sideman and Heather Bryant, UNH Extension; Mark Hutton and Bruce Hoskins, UMaine Extension; Margaret Skinner, UVM; Eric Sideman, MOFGA; John Spargo, Penn State.

VERMONT BECOMES 14TH STATE TO NAME A STATE VEGETABLE

On May 24 Governor Shumlin signed Act 127 designating the Gilfeather turnip as the State Vegetable. This was the culmination of a 2-year effort by grades 4,5,6 students from the Wardsboro Elementary School who testified at the State House about their hometown, homegrown, humble turnip (perhaps a rutabaga?) For more info see: <http://www.wardsborovermont.com/the-gilfeather-turnip.html>. The 14th Annual Gilfeather Turnip Festival will take place in Wardsboro on October 22.

NOFA/VVBGA ON-FARM WORKSHOPS (\$20 members/\$30 non-members)

July 12, 4-6 pm. [Organic High Tunnel Tomatoes](#) at Cedar Circle Farm, E. Thetford, VT

July 19, 4-6 pm. [Raspberry and Blueberry Varieties for Vermont Growers](#), Adam's Berry Farm, Charlotte, VT

Aug. 30, 5-7 pm. [Producing Healthy Brassicas with Biocontrols and Rotation](#), Clearbrook Farm, Shaftsbury, VT

Sept. 13, 4-6 pm. [Post-Harvest Process: Wash Station Design](#), Root 5 Farm, Fairlee, VT

Sept. 21, 1-5 pm. [Learning Journey to Massachusetts](#): Atlas Farm, South Deerfield, MA and Red Fire Farm, Granby, MA.

All NOFA-VT 2016 [on-farm workshops](#):

<http://nofavt.org/events/annual-nofa-vt-events/farm-workshop-series>