Vermont Vegetable and Berry News November 24, 2009 Compiled by Vern Grubinger, University of Vermont Extension (802) 257-7967 ext.13, vernon.grubinger@uvm.edu http://www.uvm.edu/vtvegandberry

(Montpelier) November in Vermont has been very kind and gone a long way towards making up for the miserable October we experienced. I am convinced that sun light is way more important than temperature where greenhouse salad is concerned. Our drainage project for the greenhouses is already showing some positive impact; there's a great deal less disease on the salad this fall. Still not sure if it's just drainage or also the cultivar, dry November or the spraying program. Probably all of them combined. The beds look great and have filled out nicely. Demand continues to outstrip supply to the point that I am focusing more on direct retail than wholesale, much to the dismay of wholesale customers. I am seeing some black spot on the daytonia. It occurs every year, does not kill the plants but the leaves are cosmetically challenged. Here's hoping the farmer's almanac is correct and we are in for a mild winter.

(Craftsbury) What winter? I don't think there's ever been a nicer first half of November in the Northeast Kingdom. We've had at least 7 days of sun so far; usually that would cover all of November and December. That being said our greenhouse crops are still behind as much of October was poorer than normal growing conditions and they are having trouble catching up.

(Durham CT) We might plant some more carrots, beets and lettuce before it gets really cold; everything else is planted and looks great. We're trying 7 green, samish, renegarde for winter spinach. The bordeaux spinach has also been great as a late fall crop, but is now beginning to

(Argyle, NY) Autumn has been great for extended growing on our farm; several plantings of broccoli, cauliflower, and cabbages that we thought weren't going to mature have been harvested over the past 2 weeks, most peaking this past week just in time for our biggest markets on the Saturday before Thanksgiving. We are currently harvesting from the fields: 4 types of cauliflowers, broccoli, red/green cabbage, leeks, Brussels sprouts, kale, Swiss chard, letttuce, mesclun, spinach, herbs, arugula, radishes, kohlrabis, and just did the last of the celery...and we have the root cellar crops (beets, carrots, potatoes, turnips, rutabagas) and winter squash and shallots. Thus, we have a huge diversity of product and our customer support has been wonderful for the winter markets.

Downy mildew has been a problem with some of the field lettuce, so we've made extra mesclun with the inner leaves. The coldest temperature we've had is about 25 degrees so we've been lucky (with rowcovers protecting a lot) but we will be moving the cabbage that matured and field lettuce to the root cellar soon. The crops in our two high tunnels (Fivestar lettuce for mesclun, Swiss chard, kale, arugula, spinach, Asian Greens, etc.) look good and will be ready soon for markets once the field crops are done. We enjoy this time of year for farm clean-up, equipment maintenance and storage, and we got the last of the cover crops down after the big harvests last week (and before more rains). We look forward to good winter conferences, starting with the New England Vegetable and Fruit Conference on Dec. 15-17 with lots of good farmer-to-farmer and regular sessions (see www.newenglandvfc.org/).

(Little Compton RI) Our winter market got off to a slow start this year. Last year was nothing short of meteoric increase in sales every week. I knew it wasn't sustainable. The economy in recession and competition from other winter markets have taken the wind out of our sails. Yet this pre-Thanksgiving Saturday beat all others. So go figure. We have taken to adding some extras to lure customers in: now we are juicing our extra sweet winter harvest carrots. People are shocked to find carrot juice so sweet and immediately they buy a 2# bag of carrots for \$3.50. We give out samples of the juice constantly but feel it is made up for in bulk carrot sales.

On the growing side, I have made a very unscientific decision that Bok Choy plants are the canary in the coal mine for seeing if you have aphids in the greenhouse. The last three winters they are always the first plants to get a real bad infestation. We similarly use yellow varigated sage for seeing if white fly is in our tomatoes. It works every time and much easier to use than yellow sticky cards. Damping off in our arugula is real bad; will try Oxidate drench. We again have cyclamen mites on our spinach. Saw some transplanted Hakuri turnips do real well in a friend's greenhouse.

Another first that has worked great is: we had some late planted rainbow chard and the plants never got that developed, so we gave them a haircut, plucked them out of the ground, and replanted in the greenhouse. They are doing great and took off like a rocket.

(Fairlee)

NOFA/ Mass is researching organic management strategies that farmers and gardeners used and how they affected the extent of late blight. The insights collected will be presented at the NOFA/ Mass Winter Conference on January 16, 2010, in the Spring 2010 Edition of The Natural Farmer, and on the NOFA/ Mass website. The goal is to improve our understanding of what organic growing practices for tomatoes were actually applied in 2009 and determine which strategies can be effective in managing the disease. We are seeking response from growers in MA, VT, CT, RI, NY, NJ, ME, NH, and PA. The survey deadline is January 1, 2010. Click on: http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=7gWicbMRJAK9uhwb 2bBtdxw 3d 3d A grant from Whole Foods Market supports this research project. If you have questions, contact Ben Grosscup, ben.grosscup@nofamass.org, 413-658-5374.