

So far the overwintered ornamental stock does not seem to have any population booms of thrips, which usually start to show up in force this time of year. I have some persistent foxglove aphids, but ladybugs and Aphidoletes seem to be keeping those in check. I am told by one of my suppliers that green and brown lacewings are excellent for aphid control. I would be curious if others have had good luck with them, because I have not, to date. Tomato grafting is going along ok (at least by our low standards) and on time. We always have trouble with the healing process, and it gets trickier later when we do the last grafts for the fall houses. The bright spot is that despite the weather being a harbinger of bad things to come, it is delightful none-the-less to be outside working in. This is the earliest I have ever had next winter's wood supply cut and in the garage.

(Newburyport MA) Our gravel Merrimack soils are dry with soil temps in the upper forties. First peas went in on February 29, the earliest we have ever planted, by a week. Overwintered spinach, cress and bunching onions growing very fast under lightweight remay. Planted first three tomato houses this week with large blooming transplants; cheap oil and warm temps so we are starting these crops at 74F night temps. Hope to have cherry tomatoes by early May, when we can price them at \$6.75 for a heaping half pint. Also planted one house of basil today, in containers, with Albion and Seascape strawberries in 12" baskets hanging overhead, and running night temps at 68F. Will have pansy baskets ready for sale this weekend, and cut daffodils ready in the field. Cut daffodils are a great long term crop for us; big upfront cost but good return over many years with low maintenance. By planting along the outside edge of heated greenhouses and in the field you can harvest from late March until mid-May. Sell well at markets and CSA Members love to cut their own.

Got a chance to plant peas and carrots two days ago and hoping this rain is enough moisture to get them off to a good start. Just spent a weekend with Hugh Lovell and now am convinced it is better to only add compost as a top dress activity and not to rototill it into the beds. We are also buying a small power harrow for our BCS to do more soil prep in our greenhouses and elsewhere and try to not mess up the delicate balance of the soil food web.

(l'Ange Gardien, Quebec) Harvesting overwintered spinach and lettuce. Mostly alone on the market with fresh greens. Arugula, radishes, beets, other greens and kale are doing fine but not to harvest yet. Experience some tip burn on spinach, not sure I should use calcium fertilizer, keep GH colder or have better irrigation practices. Probably all of these. Always looking to get the maximum crop in my high value GH per square meter, trying seeding arugula and beets together on different rows, trying to keep a nursery row to avoid transplanting shock on certain crops. Maybe try to fit microgreens between two crops, as one has gone to seed and too early for the other.

The evidence is documents and pictures that are in your on-line farm folder, which is then reviewed for completeness by your peers before accreditation is granted and your CAPS "eBadge" and paper certificate are awarded. The accreditation fee for 2016 is \$100, though you can also use CAPS just to develop a food safety plan, without getting accredited, for free if you wish. To become accredited by the end of 2016 you must finalize your produce safety plan by April 1.

CAPS is not a regulatory program nor is it a guarantee of food safety. CAPS is not a substitute for complying with food safety laws, though it can be a part of that compliance. CAPS is simply a system for the VVBGA to establish its own food safety best practices and recognize member farms that apply them. To get started go to <http://capsvt.org/> then create an account and start drafting your produce safety plan. If you currently have a produce safety plan, you can cut-and-paste portions of it into your on-line farm folder, which is shareable, revisable, and renewable. For more information contact hans.estrin@uvm.edu or 802 380 2109 (phone or text.)

If you are not yet a member of the VVBGA here is the link to join the association. The fee is \$45 per farm for 2016, go to <http://vvbga2016memberships.eventbrite.com>

FARM TRANSFER WEBINARS

Transferring the Farm: Getting Started. Mar 16, 2016, 12 noon to 1 pm. As the first of the series, Bob Parsons, agricultural economist at the University of Vermont, will offer information about how farm families can get started in planning a farm business transfer to the next generation.

The webinar is free of charge and open to the public; register at:
<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/5828597273590682628>

Transferring the Farm: Tools You Can Use. Mar 23, 2016, 12 noon to 1 pm. As the second of a two-part webinar series, Bob Parsons, agricultural economist at the University of Vermont, will describe legal and business tools that farm families can use to effectively transfer the farm from one generation to the next. The webinar is free of charge and open to the public; register early at:

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/7795227751500403460>

GAPS CERTIFICATION WORKSHOP APRIL 5, BARRE, VT

Location: UVM Extension Office, 327 US Route 302, Barre. 8:30 am– 4:00 pm

This workshop will help farmers understand and prepare for GAPs certification. It is being co-taught by UVM Extension Produce Safety Coordinator Ginger Nickerson and Gretchen Wall of Cornell Extension and the Produce Safety Alliance Coordinator. Farmers will leave the workshop with a solid understanding of the science, risks and principles behind Good Agricultural Practices, a draft of a food safety plan in the GAPs Audit format, an understanding

of what happens at a GAPs Audit, and many resources. Registration fee: \$50. Space is limited. There are also two pieces of homework to do to help you get the most out of the workshop. Register here: <https://www.regonline.com/Register/Checkin.aspx?EventID=1804822> or contact Ginger Nickerson at 802-505-8189 or gnickers@uvm.

IS ELDERBERRY CULTIVATION RIGHT FOR YOUR FARM?

Growing numbers of Vermont farmers and homesteaders are considering diversifying into “superfruits” like Elderberry, Aronia and Haskap because of interest in their rich antioxidant profiles and other benefits. That trend led UVM Extension’s Center for Sustainable Agriculture to secure a Working Lands Enterprise Board grant to explore the commercial potential of one of