



Vermont Vegetable and Berry News

(Rochester) A week of May-like weather launched us into blueberry and raspberry pruning at a frenzied pace. The farm always looks beautiful as it emerges from the winter and it feels good to get going for the season. But the Patriots started to break bud and some of the brambles are leafing out. With night temperatures in the teens this week we think the blueberries should endure but we have seen post-dormant raspberry canes compromised by hard frosts before and are nervous. We can cover some young raspberries but will leave the oldest, tallest sections to their fate.

(Westminster) My first entry in last year's farm journal on 3/3/11 was "One of the worst winters we've had in a long, long time". What a difference a year makes. Winter rye is growing nicely, the clover cover crop sowed with the now dead oats, is doing well. I uncovered 2,000 of the 5,000 strawberry plants planted last year. The plants with the least straw on top of them have healthier greener conditions. Arugula should be ready for sale next week and spinach the next week after that; both from unheated hoop-houses. Will be seeding another house in spinach next week. I hope the asparagus doesn't emerge too early with this heat. Looking out my window at the fat buds on the apple tree. Weird.

(Plainfield NH) The hot days have done some drying of the fields that flooded, but we still haven't gotten over the financial and psychological loss, so there is a much reduced planting plan for this year. But trays are coming up in the greenhouse, changing lots of things to paper pots, new cultivators for the 100, and whole rows of garlic coming through the mulch! Spring...

(S. Burlington) Winter crops growing amazingly with last week's summer weather. New crops also coming along much faster than normal so there shouldn't be much lag time between

Because this is normally greenhouse season only, we haven't been able to take advantage of early tillage and planting, in part because we were watering like mad this past week. One of my fields has a haze of redroot pigweed up! Pruning blueberries is complete, we need to tip back the raspberries. Prepping in the tomato greenhouses and planting a bit earlier than usual due to better luck with grafting. Will start manuring raspberries and some bare ground this week, No major pest problems in the greenhouses, yet.

(West Rutland) The ticks are out, pulled one out of my back the other day. Several of my friends contracted Lyme disease and then got the cure; good luck keeping up 12 hour days if you get the disease because the medicine kicks the crap out of you. Garlic is up too high for my liking. I am concerned about cold weather coming back and freezing the crop. Planting some hops this year. Of course, the hoofed ones are known to attack hops, so I got a new bottle of Shooters Choice and gave "the preacher" a good cleaning. Who knows, could be that less hoofs equals less ticks and a full freezer.

(Grand Isle) Most of our time has been spent seeding in the greenhouse and finishing up those winter projects that seem to linger into spring time. We have our grafted tomatoes in 6 inch pots and they are growing well. We will move them to a final house in two weeks or less. We raked the straw mulch off the strawberries, sweet williams, campanula, and shasta daisies on March 18th. The garlic is all coming up fine which is good since it never got mulch last November. At dusk yesterday a huge barred owl with sat on a utility wire by one of our fields. We indicated that she could have all the voles she wanted.

(Westminster West) It's been super unseasonal but we haven't changed our plans, as the weather can always go bad. It is great to see the winter rye greening up and growing along with the garlic crop, which we top dressed with N to keep growing, and did a bit of weeding. Bug control in all the greenhouses are looking good with the good predator bugs working overtime. Pansies are starting to bloom so we will start shipping for Easter! We have had a hard time finding people that want to work full time; amazing, but most people we interview only want part time work! Gearing up for a busy season and spent the very windy day getting greenhouses ready for freezing weather. Very dry and already had to start using back up well for water. Looking forward to plowing and getting fields ready next week for the real growing season.

(Little Compton RI) We left a third of our carrots in the ground to overwinter them, #1 because we couldn't fit anything in the cooler after harvesting all the other root crops in December and #2 there is no comparison between a fresh winter-frosted fresh carrot in March and a carrot that has been sitting in limbo at 34 degrees. We beat or cut off the tops and then cover them with a heavy dense row cover and then some dead greenhouse plastic. Yes, the voles can do a number on them but it is tolerable. Our overwintered Bridger onions from Johnny's did much better than last year, when we killed them with kindness by providing too much insulation and we also left the covers on too late in March thus they bolted vs. sizing up. In the end, they gave us 1400lb but the bolted core was hard and dry. Spinach is looking great; the deer agree and have eaten most of it. Spargo and Space did best for our greenhouse spinach. Greenhouse winners: Happy Rich was great and didn't get funky with the low light and cold. Black summer and most of the bok chois were real good to great. Cilantro, Yukina Savoy, Red Komamatsuna, Red Rain, Ruby Streaks, Breen lettuce. Greenhouse losers: Red bok choi, Komamatsuna green (it got leggy and yellow), Lacinto Kale (didn't hate it but made better money with other stuff).

MONITOR DEGREE DAYS AND PREPARE FOR EARLY INSECT ARRIVAL

This unusually warm season may cause some insect pests to emerge earlier than usual. Here's the link to a fact sheet from Univ. of Wisconsin that lists the accumulated degree days (measure of seasonal warmth) necessary for the emergence of commr the emer of

GROWING DRY BEANS PRESENTATION

On April 10th in Montpelier at the Kellogg-Hubbard Library from 6:15-8pm Jack Lazor of Butterworks Farm will be talking about growing dry beans in VT and Joseph Bossen of Vermont Beancrafters will presenting the buyer/processor perspective. The event is free. For more information: rachel.schattman@uvm.edu or 802-656-9140.

PRACTICAL FOOD SAFETY WORKSHOP APRIL 12

Protect your farm's markets and profitability: write a Practical Food Safety Plan. This workshop is aimed at small and diversified farms. It is the second year that UVM Extension is offering a one-day workshop on this topic for produce growers. In the morning, you will learn the specifics of contamination risks on small farms. Then y