

## Vermont Vegetable and Berry News April 21, 2009

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### REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

(Wolcott) Seems just like last year at this time: a long spell of dry, sunny weather that got the fields dried out earlier than we'd expected. The Brassica seed crop plugs are all growing strong and we're thinking to put some of them out in the field already - they can use the freezing nights to make a better seed crop. Last year we tried two broccoli crops and only one made seed, so we're growing that one again - the purple one called Rosalind. Tomatoes and peppers are all planted. The peppers didn't germinate well for some reason - had to replant some. Now on to the melons and watermelons.

(Montpelier) Things are going well so far this year and the early moderate weather is allowing me to get ahead of schedule for a change. Applications of nematodes last August and September in the greenhouses appears to have done an excellent job suppressing early flea beetles and Asian chafer beetle grubs. Found a high population of grubs but in only one 12 foot bed. Some early Downy Mildew in some of the lettuce but this appears to be under control and going away as temperatures warm up. Garlic has popped up and gave it some foliar feed to help it out a bit. Tomatoes are going into the greenhouses and look really good. I am using these things called "Kozy Cotes" also known as "walls of water". So the tomatoes went in on April 3<sup>rd</sup> with no supplemental heat. The couple of nights with outside temperatures at 17-20 degrees did not bother them. Inside Kozy Cote minimum temperature reading did not go below 42 degrees. Thinking about trialing a small batch next year and planting in early March. Off to scout for woodchucks and trying to figure out what to do about the deer herd.

(Starksboro) Very dry early spring. I got my peas planted by 4/16 which is a personal best. Previously, the earliest was 4/20. I do worry about planting too early, because frequently all you get is poor

(Moretown) Salad Turnips, Radishes and Spinach have all popped out of the soil, under the Agribon. The Garlic is 2 to 3 inches tall. Even with the lack of rain this spring, half of my fields are still too soggy to work. The other half is looking great and workable. The deer have come out in force and I'm foreseeing a long, inevitable challenge with them this season. As a new organic farmer and member of the VVBGA, this is my first report and certainly not my last. I am so honored to be a part of this.

(Dummerston) Beautiful spring weather made for nice field work and great greenhouse growing. Now a little rain for the icing on the cake. So far the best bug and disease free greenhouse season we've experienced. Opened for retail sales April 10 and the first three days broke all previous sales records, mostly on flower sales. What's up with that? As everyone probably knows vegetable seed and plant sales are off the charts and we're beginning to see that move north. Pull that aphid-infested spinach and fill the hoop house with vegetable starts and herbs. We're all gonna be rich!

(Plainfield) Haven't done any field work yet, in spite of how dry it is. Nights continue to be so cold the soil temperature is still too low to plant. Raked some strawberries, but most are still mulched. Plan to finish that project this coming week. Raked straw off of garlic, which was having a hard time coming up through the wet cold straw. Overwintered spinach greenhouse doing well, except some crispy yellow edges. Not a disease I am told, trying to feed and water it away. Greenhouse seedlings looking good. Planting more tomatoes and broccoli now to extend the sales season into mid June. Very busy potting on.

(Westminster West) Somehow we are slipping into another season. Started plowing, ready to set out onions later this week, 40,000 plants, I must be nuts. Garlic well up and vigorous. Early veggie pacs sold out, waiting for next batch to be ready. Greenhouse raspberries coming up quite nice. Weather has been not very nice really. Fuel costs down, labor costs are up. Have a nice spring!

(Plainfield NH) The work, weather, animals and bankers have been the easy problems to deal with this year. Along with the concerns and anxiety about the uncertainties of the H2A program and the myriad of food safety acts and proposed legislation, we found ourselves in the crosshairs of the NH Dept. of Labor. After their unannounced visit in mid-March we were fined \$4000. After the generation and submission of the appropriate and required paperwork the fines were reduced, but it made us feel pretty vulnerable about the evermounting regulatory (current and future) issues that will affect many of us small and mid-sized family farms. We have been so consumed with it that some of .27 u5t 0 1 5 ( 26 0 0 1 247.1.

aphids which have been overwintering in our year-