

Vermont Vegetable and Berry News April 23, 2018

Both retail and wholesale markets have been very steady and strong throughout this winter season. Root crops sell very well even into mid-June until bunched beets and carrots become available. I've been very pleasantly surprised at just how many roots can be sold at the early outdoor markets. They sure contribute to great early season cash flow. Nothing planted outdoors yet, but maybe this coming week.

(Plainfield NH) This past weekend was a welcome relief from the grey miserable weather of the past two weeks. We busied ourselves transplanting and readying for the opening of our greenhouses. We had a brisk day Saturday with gardeners coming out after being cooped up by the weather. In the field, we have started tillage in earnest, and have been getting fertility out.

The Jamaican guest workers arrive this week, in time to help get 4 more tomato houses planted. Next is to get the potatoes and onion transplants in and some carrots, spinach, beets seeded. If that all happens in the next week we will start laying plastic and interseeding drive rows with Dutch white clover.

Pest problems are Xanthomonas showing up on a couple of geraniums, a few aphids that we are spot treating with Hippodamia ladybeetles, and PM on our first tomatoes. Last year we got hit with Anthracnose in some of the blueberries, so we are getting ready to do some detail pruning and embark on a spray program. Strawberry crowns look good after uncovering them, seemingly little winter injury. Brambles likewise are showing no winter injury at this point, but a little concerned about degree of vole damage in the summer raspberries.

(Argyle NY) This week we will have managed to get in two field seedings for April, but the carrots and beets are not up yet. Backed up with lettuce and other transplants that need to get out; will utilize these dry days to the utmost. Looking at our records we are not far off the norm for maturing plants in the high tunnels, in spite of the cool weather.

Did not see any downy mildew or powdery mildew on anything in the tunnels but have some aphids which is not normal for this time of year. Ladybugs are not working hard enough. As winter markets are coming to an end they are finishing strong with the warm sunny weather bringing folks out. Root crops are thinning out in the root cellar but have plenty to go till the new crops are in.

GET READY FOR MUMMYBERRY

adapted from an article by Mary Conklin, UConn Extension

get ahead of you. Forsythia bloom is a good indicator of when to look for the mummy berry fungal cups that form from the mummified berries on the ground. This also lines up with the green tip bud stage of blueberries. Mummy berry is a two stage disease. The first stage is in the cool spring when the fungal spores move by wind and rain and infect new leaves and shoots.

The next phase occurs when the fungus, carried by rain, pollinators and insects, moves to the flower and infects the newly forming berries. The berries shrivel before they ripen, take on a whitish appearance, and eventually drop to the ground. The following spring, mushroom-looking fungal cups sprout out of the mummified fruit and the cycle begins again. Rutgers University considers 5 mummies per bush to indicate heavy disease pressure.

It is nearly impossible to use raking or picking up all the berries on the ground as the sole

chips/mulch to cover all mummified berries that fell from last season. In future years, try to have this mulch layer down well before the plants reach the green tip stage or before forsythia begins to bloom. Cultivation between the rows will help to bury mummies that are not normally covered with mulch. Fungicides, organic and non-organic, are available to control both stages of mummy berry. The New England Small Fruit Management Guide has a detailed table showing efficacy of different materials for management of different blueberry diseases

<https://ag.umass.edu/fruit/ne-small-fruit>

I suggest that a light layer of straw, about an inch thick, be left on the plants. Leaves and flowers can grow up through this thin layer and it may help reduce disease problems later in the season and will also help prevent some weed seeds from germinating if bare soil is exposed to sunlight. Lastly, mulch removal just prior to a rain event helps the plants respond well and keeps the mulch in place.

HIGH TUNNEL SOIL TESTING REMINDER

In established tunnels with relatively high organic matter (compared to the field) it is helpful to use the Saturated Media Extract (SME) test, as well as the regular field soil test (modified Morgan's extract.) The SME test measures water-soluble, immediately available nutrients and the field soil test measures nutrients in reserve, extracted with a weak acid. Both tests measure soil pH and organic matter, but the SME test results also include soluble salts and available N which are important

