

## Vermont Vegetable and Berry News May 21, 2008

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### REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

(as of May 19)

(S. Royalton) Onions are transplanted in, have plenty of sun and water but are struggling for some unknown reason. I gave them a shot of fish to get them going. I took advantage of that first warm period and planted sweet corn by seed on April 18th. Not the greatest

(Woodbury) It was great to have the nicer weather to get some field work done, but now we need some rain. Our soils dry out pretty quickly, and a persistent breeze has taken out a lot of moisture. I am hoping that this impending change in the weather really brings some water my way. It seems unnatural to be irrigating when the blackflies are biting. Plant sales at market have been strong even early in the season. We are getting on schedule after the usual start up issues and are excited about all that is to come, although I have some concerns about how much will be left at the end of the week to go to farmers market.

(Westminster) Early sweet corn! We ate our first ear of sweet corn on May 15th really! I did a germination test in February and decided to pot up some of the sprouted seeds. We hid them behind the furnace on the sunny side of the greenhouse. They tasseled out in early April and produced nice size, yummy ears in mid-May. Anyone ever beat that? No,

chilly nights but sales are very good.

(Durham, CT) The big thing this year is to get enough planted on time. We have more business than product right now. Despite all the economic indicators, demand is still strong for salad greens and arugula.

-till year. Last  
ith compost, alfalfa meal, and a small  
amount of organic fertilizer and then planted. After a few cuttings, everything is mowed down, torched, lightly saddle-hoed, covered with black plastic for ten days and then replanted. Weed control is really good this way.

Johnny's and see if that can replace the covering with black plastic step as well as the saddle hoe. Meanwhile, tomatoes are happy in the greenhouse, some grafted, and small green fruit waiting to get red on several of the plants.

(Plainfield) We have our onions, leeks, kale, chard and lettuce out. Peas, beets and carrots have germinated OK. Cherry tomatoes move into the ground in an unheated greenhouse this week. I wish it would rain before I lay plastic, but there is not serious rain in the forecast. It's time to irrigate. Greenhouse plant sales are strong, prices up. Still picking greenhouse spinach and salad mix.

(Salisbury NH) Things are in high gear already. I almost am ready to pick lettuce, radishes and spinach. Now it's so dry we really need rain. What happened to all that snow moisture? Did a little trial to see if lettuce and spinach might come back if I covered it with a row cover. Not sure if that's what helped it come back or if it was all the snow cover but they did survive. Now the test will be how it actually tastes. Hoop house still in garage because we're too busy to set it up. There's always fall. Haven't hung our 'open' sign but should for last weekend of May. Can't wait to read everyone else's field notes, if anyone has time to write them.

(Killington) The growing season is off to a great start. Garlic is 12 inches high. Mixed greens will be ready for Memorial Day weekend with some help from our watering system. Sugar snap transplants are doing great, heading the right direction, up the fence. I took a different approach to the tomatoes this year: keeping them at 70 degrees and allowing them to flower out before planting them in the hoop house.

The January seeded Swiss chard which was planted in a tunnel in March has produced well for the past 2 weeks. The cooling system in our large root cellar has paid for itself by keeping all the root crops in near perfect condition, and we'll continue to have them for markets until the new crops of potatoes and carrots come in. The strawberries are flowering and forming fruit nicely, and the winter rye will be in pollen this week. The orchard is at petal fall, so the kaolin clay is being applied now in layers. Our November installed 10kW solar system has been spinning for months due to all the great sunshine and our electric bills have been down by about 85 percent!

(Wolcott, VT) The fields are in great shape, but we could use some more rain. We transplanted the brassicas and long-transplant the corn; next week melons. This month is a lot of laying plastic and harrowing the areas that will get cover crop this year. And re-arranging the maps as things get planted differently than the map dictated.

(Grand Isle) We have been pleased to have more moderate spring temperatures than a year ago this time. It has meant more early plantings and some savings on greenhouse fuel consumption. We are spending much of our time with asparagus harvesting. Our first two weeks of farmers markets have been well attended by eager shoppers. It has been educational to learn more about our farm by participating as a host farm in some of the current university field research studies; namely with nematodes and pest issues and

The Haygrove solution to strong winds is to open up the houses completely! It seems counter intuitive but is logically seeing just how under constructed the individual members are. A few years ago a few of us New England farmer made a trip to the Salinas area to checkout vegetable growing on a slightly larger scale.... One of my memories was seeing a Haygrove type greenhouse in ruins and hearing about another that had gone down another township away. Before making an investment of this type, do a wind assessment to be sure you are up to the challenge!

## **VERMONT GROWERS**