

Vermont Vegetable and Berry News – May 22, 2012
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REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

(Royalton) Rhubarb is in full swing, having to dead head flowers daily. Strawberries are blossoming , and we dodged a frost one recent night. Asparagus is really going well, in its fourth year of production. Already seeing asparagus beetle damage. Peas are four or five inches high. Garlic really took off in the last rainy period, as did the pastures. Headed toward a

(Rochester) Several frosty nights caused some damage to fully open blueberry blossoms but the damage appears only to be scattered. The temperatures must have been hovering right at the critical point. We recorded 27 degrees one night which should have caused more destruction than it appears to have. The damage was worst in the Patriots which are our earliest to flower, but quite minor in the later-blooming varieties in which we have excellent bloom. It remains to be seen whether the frosts have caused structural damage in the raspberries. Pollinators are very numerous, presumably due to the mild winter, and some fruit has already set. Of course, for the same reason we will likely get plenty of bugs that are not friendly--already we have seen hoplia beetles which I understand are fairly new to Vermont. They feed on the blossoms, but the numbers are modest. Overall we are upbeat about the likely fruit set and are hopeful of a good yield this year.

(Wolcott) Laying plastic like crazy, getting out all the sweet corn and hopefully some butternuts. Weeding the perennial onions. We're up to full crew and swinging into full gear. Hoping it doesn't get crazy hot in the next few weeks so the Brassica seed crops don't bolt too early.

(Plainfield NH) Hopefully frost is over. Broken sleep makes it hard to function the following day. Wildly fluctuating temps and moisture have been hard on the strawberry crop this year. It could be nutritional, but petioles are shorter than they should be at this stage of bloom and we should be further along in bloom. Two weeks ago we looked for Asian Garden Beetle larvae which have raised havoc with roots of some of our plantings, but the soil was too cold and they were still down too deep. Varieties seem weird, with Cabot in full bloom and Cavendish and Jewel at 10%. I thought this would get easier as I got older... We avoided the onion maggots, but had been watering transplants in the greenhouse with *Steinernema feltiae* nematode routinely, perhaps that helps? Blueberries look good. Will start cleaning up the berry beds as the college kids trickle in. First planting of melons, cukes, field tomatoes, squash and corn are in. Seeing high populations of flea beetle, haven't actually checked the cole crops for root maggot, although didn't put any out early and put them on sandiest soil.

(Little Compton RI) We are hearing of root maggot problems all around us. The first flight missed us but we'll be really for flight number two by getting some nematodes to drench our last onion and leek transplants. Two hundred is cheap money when you look at two acres. We have had seven inches of rain of late and so are a bit behind. At least parsnips are coming up like they finally should. We had a small disaster that turned into a valuable teaching experience. Yesterday when the sun finally showed up all our greenhouse fans were cranking and then suddenly, they all stopped. I quickly traced it back to the main feed panel feeding all the greenhouses! A hundred-amp breaker had over heated. We had no spare!

I quickly got a replacement just in time. But upon inspection of the rest of the breakers, especially the ones running the furnaces, I noticed they were close to failing as well. My electrician said that with heavy use breakers will only be good for eight years. All these were eighteen plus! Do yourself a favor and replace your heavy use breakers and keep track of their age. It will save you some headaches and may keep you barn from burning down!

(Salisbury NH) Weather has improved a little. Put tomato transplants in this weekend. Space spinach planted outside 10 days ago is slow to germinate. Hoophouse new plantings of spinach and lettuce very quick to grow. Overwintered spinach is about to be pulled up. Walla Wall and Red Zeppelin onions planted mostly in raised beds look great. Red Norland potatoes planted several weeks have nice growth finally. Our pepper and eggplant transplants we started from seed got a bad case of aphids from being placed in the hoophouse during the day and the aphids overwintered too. Hoping to open next weekend. We have regular customers that come now but don't want to hang the open sign until supplies are greater.

(Argyle NY) We started picking strawberries May 16th, earliest ever and the same day we got hit with hail which wasn't severe but still damaged lots of greens and even dented all the rhubarb. Hoping the damage to onions doesn't start diseases; time for a copper preventative.

