

VERMONT VEGETABLE AND BERRY GROWER NEWS – June 1, 2021
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Celery that we planted in the tunnel is growing nicely as we are trying a new method of harvesting outside stalks and letting the plant stay until fall. Has high yield potential. Tomatoes are going in the ground this week along with all the usuals. As COVID restrictions are lifted our online store is holding steady and actually gaining more customers weekly. We will report on this new trend every month. Stay tuned.

(Little Compton RI) Last week, after a few hot days, we opened up our five tomato houses to full exposure to prep them for the upcoming dawg days of summer. The oilman had asked if we were done for the season. I hesitated but told him to put 100 gallons in each greenhouse for insurance. Boy did that pay off in spades! Last weekend we had 3.5" of rain, 38-mph gusts and night temperatures down to 47 degrees! I don't want to think how much botrytis and powdery mildew we would be into without being able to keep the houses at 62 degrees.

We also turned off all automatic watering and had the crew clean all the leaves off up to the first clusters. With grafted plants one has to be much more aggressive with leaf thinning; even in the middle of the plants, as they are always leaning toward going vegetative, so thinning has to be a part of the growing plan.

With increasing competition at the farmers' markets, we have made the decision to give up some greenhouse growing area profits to grow items that will show our patrons that we are the first to have certain items such as peas, pole beans and carrots long before our competition. Yes, we could make more money growing tomatoes but "having it first to market" is more important in some situations. Markets are starting out good but already we can sense that the drive behind the Covid sales of last year are dwindling and will continue to do so as the public revels in their new found freedom of choice where to spend their time and money.

The sudden shortage of available organic Kreher's fertilizer is weighing on our minds as we look toward the fall. After the winter squash and sweet potatoes go in we may need to find a different fertilizer option.

(Plainfield NH) Much needed rain has come, a little under an inch as I write this. Not a particularly friendly weather pattern so far this planting season. Lack of rain accompanied by constant winds and temp fluctuations have altered how we normally do our spring tillage and planting on our sandy soils. We have fully embraced drip under plastic and the additional costs, which has made transplanting and establishment of everything from tomato to cut flowers much easier and effective. We are also using more landscape cloth between plastic rows that are 5' on center (flowers, herbs, peppers) but still going with our low clover cover crops between things like tomatoes, cucurbits, melons etc.

Strawberries are sizing up nicely, now if we can just get a timely stretch of decent weather. I have been foliar feeding them

Trying some fall squash and pumpkin planting direct seeded no-till to see how it goes, but still transplanting mostly, to insure getting a crop. Trying to figure out nutrient delivery with the no-till crops, as we don't have a big enough fertilizer tank or knifing system built onto our planters. Also very concerned about weed escapes and how to deal with that.

Lots of vegetables in tunnels and heated greenhouses. Spider mite problems in one cuke house, near a heater. Have been blasting the plants with N. fallacious, but not sure it's working. Two-spot mites are always difficult for us to control with predators. Tomatoes look good, but an errant vole has been destroying a house of crucifers and we can't seem to corner him.