

Vermont Vegetable and Berry News – August 9, 2011
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(Burlington – UVM Common Ground Student-Run Farm) It has been unbelievably dry this week; what a change from this spring. Great time for our irrigation AND cooler to break! Aside from a few technical difficulties things are still looking good. Our beans are going crazy, we have some jalapenos and okra! We found large tomato hornworms and Acorn squash is facing squash vineborer pressure. We are now undertaking to re-trellis our field tomatoes which are so heavy and unruly they have all but destroyed our stake and twine trellis. Nonetheless they have produced gorgeous tomatoes! We look forward to our watermelons which are just about ready, and our winter squash and gourds.

(Plainfield) Hot and dry is not the worst. There is still water in the river, help to carry pipe, a working pump, and some new hose to get the water to the fields. Crop response to water is dramatic. Spraying Dipel for corn ear worm, pepper borer, tomato hornworm, and cabbage moth. Entrust has lost its touch on CPB, and it is time to switch to Pyganic. Best eggplant crop ever in the new high tunnel.

(Plainfield NH) Got some drought relief last week which bought us a chance to spray, plant, weed and get some covers in. Need rain soon or back to irrigation. Originally thought our blueberries were a mediocre crop but it sized up well and wondering where they all keep coming from as the crop looks like it will be 50% bigger than last year. Melons have been coming in and although we predominantly planted Sarah's Choice and Maverick (Brent Loy's varieties from UNH) all varieties are exhibiting incredible flavor as a result of little bit of effort to keep the foliar diseases in check and no doubt the intense heat in July. Tomatoes are producing nicely although Fulvia (leaf mold) on some varieties is present and the tomato market is beginning to be saturated. As a result we are moving to our list of people who want to process tomatoes. Set traps for CEW after hearing from some growers that they were hit with it unexpectedly early, but finding none in 12 days the trap has been out. Suffered some pepper blossom and small pepper abscission in the intense heat, the purple varieties most susceptible. Sales in both wholesale and retail are still pretty strong, so far.

(Starksboro) It's getting pretty dry now, and we're irrigating what we can. We had a quick but heavy downpour back in early July just when the potatoes needed it. It's been dry enough that we have avoided any blight so far. I'm completing my first year with a high tunnel, and I've got to say: I'm not sure I ever want to grow anything outdoors again.

(S. Royalton) My field tomatoes look weak but are loaded with nice size fruit. It hurts my pride to look at them but you can't eat pride. Cantaloupes have poor size and very small plants, looks like we'll get half the harvest we normally do. On the plus side, we used the Japanese paper pot transplanter to transplant early sweet corn (planted about 3,000 plants an hour) and that did amazing. It was easy to control the spring weed plague and it appears that the denser stand has made it more difficult for the redwing blackbirds to operate. Market and stand sells have been strong.

(Warren) So far so good this season. High tunnel and hothouse crops are doing really well and we are harvesting really nice carrots right now. Great celery, too; it's on drip with a timer, watering it daily. First beet harvest was crummy with lots of breakdown on the goldens and chioggias. We have yet to run out of salad greens which is a first. Seascape strawberries are off the list: tarnished plant bugs are damaging most of the berries but there are still plenty of nice ones; with the lack of rain the quality is terrific but people are not in the strawberry frame of mind. We have been irrigating 24/7 for 3 weeks now and are happy for the rain.

The one section that we did not have irrigation on, a seeding of cilantro, dill and scallions simply withered away and died. Potato crop is looking good; surprising because the tops are really short. Onions have disease and are dying back. We have harvested a bunch of Bridgers already; about half the yield we were hoping for. Nice though, really thin necks. We put a bunch of drainage tile in the gaylords that we use for harvesting. Big difference in the drying.

(Grand Isle) We need rain. The little bit we have gotten does not seem to make a difference so we move irrigation pipe daily. We keep reminding ourselves: too dry is better than too wet. The parking lot at the farm is host to many out-of-state license plates so we are busy bagging vegetables for those summer barbecues and excursions on the boat for summer visitors. We attended the UVM extension Crop and Soil Field Day at the Rainville's Borderview farm in Alburgh and learned about various small grains grown for oil extraction, food products, and animal feed. Test plots and research data showcased particulars of soil fertility and reduced tillage results. Crops were hops, sunflowers, wheat, oats, barley, flax, triticale. Heather Darby and the rest of the staff put on a superb and well attended event.

(Little Compton RI) At the start of the CSA season in mid-June we realized that we didn't have enough cherry tomatoes for our members. We grow about ten varieties of heirloom cherry tomatoes in custom buckets hanging from the purlins of one of our old herb houses. We went and took nice clean 'sucker' cuttings from them. In four days all 400 cuttings had sprouted roots, nursed along on a half-shaded bench. The first fruiting cluster was just two leaves up the stem; talk about instant tomato seedlings! If we had started this same process with seed it would have taken three times as long and the plants would not have been as vigorous. Our first cuttings were six weeks ago and we are already harvesting tomatoes. This new knowledge will come in handy next season when I take suckers off my expensive European hybrids. It is too late for making a tomato crop this year but not too late for experimenting with

(Shelburne) Getting all my winter seeding done, ready to plant out the first winter crops. Still harvesting loads of greens, tomatoes, flowers, peppers out of the hoop house. It is dry! What a crazy swing to go from the incredibly wet spring and beginning o