

Vermont Vegetable and Berry News – September 22, 2015
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REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

(Westminster West) Great harvest weather for sure! All winter squash finally loaded into bins and moved into barn for curing and safekeeping. Good yields and very little loss from disease or random field animals. Pumpkins had some loss however with quite a few showing stress from disease, a first here. Pie pumpkins seem fine and a good crop was harvested. All other crops looking great and sales are holding steady with prices about the same as last year. Huge amount of onions dried and ready to run thru the topper this week, with some sun scald on the red varieties. Very little disease on the yellow storage types with large, solid heads. Heavy pressure from cabbage moths, most I have ever seen on a field of late Napa cabbage; finally getting it under control with a tighter spray schedule with Dipel. Haven't kept up with clearing the fields of plastic mulch and drip lines so unable to get cover crops on in a timely way, hope with major crops in we can put some labor into cleanup before it's too late.

(Starksboro) Sweet potatoes, winter squash and onions are all out of the field. We went to the Cornell meeting about Leek Moth because we had it in our garlic, onions and leeks this season. The meeting was excellent and we feel prepared to do battle with this pest next year. There was also great information on garlic harvest/storage that helped explain some weird drying we had (extra crinkly garlic skins). Fall crops are looking good, mostly thanks to the irrigation system that has been sitting around waiting to be used for 3 years. It was 39 degrees here last night, so we are making plans for the inevitable first frost warning.

(Londonderry) Leaf mold struck hard in our tomato house this August. Heavy pruning, fixing drip line leaks and Oxidate held it off. Another round of pruning and regular application of Oxidate has allowed 90% of the plants to thrive and continue to fruit! Tiny bit of frost this am. Just about the longest season between frosts for us in 18 years! Waiting for cold temps to sweeten the Liberty apple crop. Good set of late raspberries. Nice and dry for winter cover

(Burlington) Harvest is swinging into fall storage, shuffling bins, and wondering whether we'll have enough cooler and warm storage space. Nice to have a dry September and warm evenings; very little concern about chilling injury this year, as fully mature squash will be out of the field before they've seen much for cold nights. After a terrible downy mildew outbreak in our long term storage onions, things are looking OK post-curing. Despite having thick necks when the tops went down, we left them in the ground in the field for quite a while (contrary to many recommendations.) After a few weeks the necks thinned out quite a bit, and most have cured well. Size is a bit small, but given that I'd written them off entirely, w

(Proctorsville) First light frost last night. All in all an excellent harvest this season, despite the lack of rain mostly. Brussels sprouts crop was disappointing. Barely any sprouts formed, even after pulling leaves off. Disease is our suspicion, small black dots started to appear all over the plants mid-August. Tomato crop was prolific. Downy mildew hit all squash and cucumber plants. Most fields are ready for winter; only our high tunnel, cold frame, and root vegetables are left for the season, and that is ok with us!

(Elmore) So many pears and so little time to gather them! Our customers and friends still think you can't grow pears or plums or so many kinds of apples up here in northern Vermont but when they stop over and see the 15 gallon buckets that are full of them and the bending over trees loaded up with succulent fruits they seem to have a new outlook on life. We are hoping this is simply a gift from the universe, and not a precursor to a very long and challenging winter. I have emailed or called or visited all our usual buyers for our fall harvest marketing of fresh fruit and spreadable jam but I have not received any calls or emails back; it is very frustrating and sad. It used to be that coop buyers were so happy and excited when local growers had good things. now they don't give us the time of day. This is the first year I can remember that we have so many peppers turning red and the Jerusalem artichokes are already in full milk chocolate scented bright yellow flowers, contrasted against the deep blue clear skies. There is a lot to be grateful for...

(Plainfield) Growing season is ending with a flood of red and yellow sweet peppers. Best are Camen and Gourmet. Quite a bit of rot due to corn borers and sunscald. Lots of color in the hot peppers, especially Hot Paper Lantern and Devil Serrano. Late May planted hybrid carrots all sized up. Digging them now as they are starting to split. Rutabagas and daikon still sizing up. Kale going strong. Some splitting heads in cabbage, summer varieties held too long. Some cabbage failing to size, indicating some fertility dead spots in our most sandy soils. Great fall raspberry crop, making up for total failure last season. Still way too dry to plant cover crops.

(Little Compton RI) It has been the toughest year farming yet many setbacks and a historic drought at the tip of southern New England. We have circled the wagons around the fields with water sources and are ready to get it all packed away for a better year next go round. Markets and demand strong just huge gaps in our production. Like not a head of lettuce in three weeks!

(Plainfield NH) Rains have relieved the drought stress, cover crops certainly appreciate it, as well the help, who had to wear dust masks while digging potatoes. Carrots, parsnips potatoes, sweet potatoes, pumpkins and squash are yet to harvest. Sales have generally slowed, attributable to the post Labor Day doldrums, yet labor bill is still high. Fall raspberries have a fair crop due to earlier drought stress. Resisting spraying them at SWD threshold levels, but keeping them picked clean; third year doing so and getting no bad customer feedback. CEW and ECB pressure has been light this year and continues to be so.

(Newburyport MA) Continued warm sunny weather, plus irrigation to germinate recently planted fall crops, equals instant weed problems here in September. Strong demand, good harvests and late weeds all put demands on our precious time this month. Also trying to get winter greenhouse

Cucurbit s- Received a sample of Phytophthora fruit rot on spaghetti squash. This soil borne disease is usually triggered when soils remain saturated for 24 hrs. The grower felt the infection occurred earlier in the season when it was wet and then got moved to other squash fields by walking through infected fields before it was noticed. The pathogen can also move on wind-dispersed spores that are present on infected fruit. Symptoms look like a water-soaked spot on the fruit followed by yeasty looking spores. It often shows up in low parts of the field or wetter areas. If you notice it in a low area, you can till under infected fruit/plants asap to limit air borne