

Vermont Vegetable and Berry News January 25, 2011

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<http://www.uvm.edu/vtvegandberry>

QUESTIONS FROM THE FIELD

What soil test should I do for the beds in my greenhouse and where do I send the samples? Since the soil in greenhouses and tunnels has usually been amended with a lot of compost and/or manure, and crops will be growing fast once they're set out, it makes sense to use the saturated media test (also called greenhouse potting soil test). This measures immediately-available nutrients as well as salt level, and nitrate-N and ammonium-N. Collect soil samples several weeks before you want to plant, and wait to add amendments until results come back. The samples should be warm and moist for at least a week before sending to the lab, to allow the microbes to become active. Bring indoors if necessary. Send at least a pint of material per sample. Most university labs will do this test, including U. Mass http://www.umass.edu/soiltest/pdf/greenhouse_media_submittal_form2011.pdf (\$12) and U. Maine. <http://anlab.umesci.maine.edu/> (\$15). Ask them to copy us both when emailing results.

What is the best value in a bagged organic fertilizer to supply Nitrogen? Using the NOFA-Vermont 2011 bulk order price list for 50 lb. bags, here are some choices and the cost per unit of N in each. Alfalfa meal (2.5-1-2) \$16.80/lb N; blood meal (12-0-0) \$14.16/lb N; Cheep Cheep (4-3-3) \$7.75/lb N; custom 6-0-6 (contains Chilean nitrate) \$8.16/lb N; peanut meal (8-1-0) \$5.88/lb N; ProBoost 10-0-0 (contains Chilean nitrate) \$5.70 lb/N. Conventional soy meal (7-1-2 typically) if purchased at \$13.75/50 lb bag \$3.93/ lb N. If your soil also needs Pains 0b

Soon after transplanting tomato seedlings into the greenhouse we noticed small areas between the veins on the lower leaves on a half dozen plants. Over the next few days the spots got bigger and spread to 30% of the house. Have you seen this before? If the dead or dying areas are mostly between the veins of the older leaves it is likely due to an abiotic cause, not a pathogenic disease. When the pattern of injury is different on old and new leaves it indicates an injury that occurred at one point in time. What you describe sounds like cold injury, a common problem in early season greenhouses when the temps are too low for tender seedlings just set out. Here are images to compare with your plants: <http://www.forestryimages.org/series/viewseries.cfm?ser=225>

CHOOSING STRAWBERRY VARIETIES

Courtney Weber, Cornell University, reprinted from NY Berry News

I often get asked by growers: What variety of strawberry should I plant? My answer is almost always: It depends. Then I ask growers to tell me what their goals are. For strawberries, do you want early season fruit to bring in customers to start your season or to go with rhubarb or asparagus? Then you need an early variety such as Earliglow or AC Wendy. Do you worry about late frosts? Then maybe

4th of July? Then Ovation and Cabot are possibilities. Where do you market: wholesale, U-pick, ready-picked on farm or at farmers markets? Wholesale markets usually require larger fruit with brighter and Cabot. U-pick are usually more discerning consumers who will sample the fruit so high flavor varieties are indicated such as Earliglow, and Jewel and varieties that freeze and process well such as Clancy and Honeoye. Be sure to let consumers know with signs or verbally which varieties are best for which purpose! Ready picked markets benefit from both high flavor and large size since customers buy with their eyes but often consume immediately. Try

strawberries at any time in the past? If red stele, black rot, Verticillium and/or general replant disease are a problem you may want to stay away from Jewel, Honeoye, Annapolis and Kent. Try more disease re sabi. Do you get fog or frequent high humidity? Powdery mildew can be an issue with Darselect, Annapolis and Earliglow as well as many day neutral varieties from California like Aromas and Diamante. No one variety will fill all needs. I suggest 3 or 4 varieties with variable harvest seasons so the risk from adverse weather and site conditions is not concentrated on one variety.