



Vermont Vegetable and Berry News November 27, 2019
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LAST DAY TO PRE-REGISTER FOR THE NEVFC IS THIS FRIDAY

The biennial New England Vegetable and Fruit Conference in Manchester NH is coming up on Dec. 10-12. Pre-registration ends on November 29. The fees for any or all 3 days are: \$115 for the first attendee per farm, \$85 for additional attendees, \$50 for students. After November 29 the fees are: \$145 for the first attendee per farm, \$115 for additional attendees, \$70 for students. To view the program and registration info go to: <https://newenglandvfc.org/>

REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

(Burlington) We've never picked sweet peppers into November before, and rarely have we hit single digits so early in November. I guess that is climate volatility for you: no killing frost and then plummeting temps. We are doing our best to ease the transition for our winter tunnel crops by keeping them as cool as we can, but I suspect we'll see more winter injury from poor hardening-off. Time will tell.

Overall production was good with many crops. This year we dedicated one small field with easy irrigation access and lower weed pressure to our baby salad greens, in perpetuity. Though we are foregoing a longer crop rotation, the irrigation and weeding advantages led to significant overall improvements in production this year, and I am excited about the potential to improve even more. We tightened up plant spacing in our tomato houses to 1 double-leader plant every 18" in row instead of 24". While this appears to have been generally favorable, we did see quite a bit more Botrytis damage in the plants, which could have been related, but also could be explained by other factors.

We added more wheels and movable surfaces to our wash/pack operation, and more containers to our harvest logistics. It is really clear that we can do a better job if we fill containers less full and use more of them. Everyone has more energy and fewer injuries; this has been a really good move for us in the past couple of years.

(Guildhall) Sparrow Arc Farm. We finished our first potato harvest, since coming to Vermont in April of this year, on November 5, just ahead of the freeze up. Having started October 9, it was a long harvest to do our 45 acres of spuds, but we had an unusually high number of breakdowns and definitely let some good digging days go by. Quality and yields were generally excellent.

Our markets were relatively strong, and we will be selling some retail through our Winter Market, once Harlow Farmstand closes for the season. I really appreciate our workers, especially our local people.

(Westminster West) Each time I think the season is over, I realize there's still more to do. Covered the strawberries today with two layers of mid-weight remay, all plants on raised beds with black plastic and ground cover between the beds. Should be a low labor field with little weeding next spring. Garlic is covered and waiting for snow.

Last deliveries for Thanksgiving done today, sold out almost everything, just as planned. Started potting up lavender cuttings for spring sales, though I feel ambivalent about doing it all over again next year. I guess it's normal to think about the future this time of year.

Sold a big load of dried hemp buds to a broker yesterday and though the price was lower than I hoped, he bought enough so we were happy. Much more in storage to trim and weigh for sale next month. It's been interesting to see the hemp season progress and learn how much labor goes into a successful crop.

Felt especially good handing all our crew a nice bonus just before Thanksgiving. Hope to see many friends at winter meetings, especially the NEVFC in Manchester NH next month!

(Plainfield NH) Winter closing in. The H2A Jamaicans worked up to the last possible day allowed by their allowed contracts...in frozen ground and snow. Got the leeks and other things out in time. Berries mulched, but didn't have time to get the herbicide (Chateau) on before the ground froze. Blueberries remained un-tamed, un-mulched and un-pruned.

Main activities now are greenhouse construction and maintenance, packing out root crops and trying to get our ornamentals cleaned up and ready for vegetative propagation. Annual service of machinery about wrapped up. No question that short days and cold temps reduce outside productivity, with hand-work and machinery, to about 40-50% of normal in more temperate months.

Will start to wrap up the books in the next few weeks to assess just what kind of year we actually had. Then head off and fill up our heads with new and radical ideas for the farm. See you all in Manchester.

(Argyle NY) Outside growing came to a grinding halt November 13 when it hit 6 degrees, though spinach harvesting continued till last Friday. Everything now will be out of the tunnels and storage. The salad mix tunnel is right on time, the spinach tunnel is behind due to late planting, and Swiss chard/ kale tunnel is big and beautiful.

We finished planting overwintered onions and put a tunnel over them. Our 20-foot wide temporary kale tunnel looks great, and our other small tunnel for Salanova is growing, but behind. Had some lettuce drop that was brought under control with Contans.

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