

Vermont Vegetable and Berry News – December 11, 2017  
compiled by Vern Grubinger, University of Vermont Extension  
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[www.uvm.edu/vtvegandberry](http://www.uvm.edu/vtvegandberry)

**VVBGA ANNUAL MEETING**

Monday, January 22, 2018

Lake Morey Resort, 1 Clubhouse Road, Fairlee, VT 05045

- 8:00 Registration, Refreshments, Visit Trade Show
- 9:30 President's Remarks. Mary Skovsted, Joe's Brook Farm, St. Johnsbury
- 9:45 A Tour of Growers on their Farms, 2017. Vern Grubinger, UVM Extension
- 10:00 A Tour of a Small U-Pick Blueberry Farm. John LaRue, Covered Bridge Farm, Underhill
- 10:15 Farming with the Next Generation at The Last Resort. Eugenie Doyle, Monkton
- 10:30 Farming with the Older Generation at Pomykala Farm. Ben Pomykala, Grand Isle
- 10:45 On-

Pre-registration is \$40 per day, per person, for VVBGA members; \$50 per day for non-members. *Add \$10 per day, per person, for walk-in registrations.* 2018 VVBGA member dues for 2018 are \$45 per farm (\$55 after January 31.) Register on-line, pay membership dues, and donate to the VVBGA research and education fund at: <https://2018vvbga.eventbrite.com>

Or, print out the membership and meeting registration form fill it out completely and mail with your check to: VVBGA, PO Box 2091, South Burlington, VT 05407  
<http://www.uvm.edu/vtvegandberry/VV&BGA/2018MembershipPlusMeeting.pdf>

Payment for the Annual Meeting must be received by January 19, 2018, either on-line or by mail for pre-registration rates. To request a disability-related accommodation to participate in these events, please contact me by January 4, 2018 so we may assist you. Questions? Vern Grubinger, UVM Extension, 802-257-7967 ext. 303, or [vernon.grubinger@uvm.edu](mailto:vernon.grubinger@uvm.edu).

Attendance at either of these events will be worth pesticide recertification credit for applicators certified in categories 1A, 2, 3, 6 and 10.

### **TRI-STATE GREENHOUSE IPM WORKSHOPS**

January 17, 2018 at Longfellows Greenhouses in Manchester ME

January 18, 2018 at UNH in Durham, NH

January 19, 2018 at Gardeners Supply in Burlington VT.

Featuring Ronald Valentin from Bioline AgroSciences, a global company that provide biological controls for insect pests in protected vegetables, fruits and ornamentals. More info and agenda at: <https://www.uvm.edu/~entlab/Greenhouse%20IPM/Workshops/2018/IPMWorkshop2018AnnouncementFINAL.pdf>. To register visit: <https://www.regonline.com/tristateipm2018>. Contact Cheryl Frank Sullivan at (802) 656-5434 or [cfrank@uvm.edu](mailto:cfrank@uvm.edu) for more info or assistance.

### **REPORTS FROM THE FIELD**

(Rochester) We are pleased with the results on our berry farm this season, and we haven't said that often over the last seven years. Treatment of fungal cankers was effective. Mummy berry was moderate in what was reported to be an outbreak year. We both mulched and sprayed lime sulfur in anticipation but think the mulching was the more effective. Fall raspberries ripened late due to a cool summer we think, so their yield was down but summer raspberries did well and made up for it. And we had good help, which is priceless. We planted some fallow rows with buckwheat for bee forage and all the pollinators loved it. The honey bees produced an attractive dark honey that is selling fast.

(Randolph Center) One update regarding my pumpkin crop. I had emailed you earlier in the fall

During the hot weather in mid-September they put on fruit and matured at an amazing pace and we actually ended up having a pretty good season. It was one of the most unusual growing experiences I've had and Mother Nature's resilience was on my mind a lot as I watched in awe at how fast those plants wanted to get to maturity and reproduce.

(Argyle NY) Last Friday the crew scrambled to harvest the last lettuce, arugula, braising greens, and bok choy outside, knowing what this week will bring. Leeks were harvested and stored and now begins the winter routine. Crops look good in the tunnels as the weather cooled and slowed down the ramped growth that came early on. Markets are as good or better than last year.

Setting up irrigation in April is always a bother with freezing nights to contend with but then it became unnecessary for the next three months. Then irrigation was critical in August through the end of October.

Back in 2000 we tilled some heavier fields to drain them better and it worked until this year. This year has been wetter than any year since then, and the tiles were spaced with the knowledge of growing corn but growing high value crops is another thing. I would space the tiles closer together like 25' apart. Everywhere there was a tile my onions and leeks were huge. They quickly dropped off in size the farther away they were. Lesson learned. Overall good solid year.

(Plainfield NH) First real snow happening outside, and the NEVF conference this coming week. Its officially winter. We are working hard just keeping up: getting greenhouse coverings on, shedding and doing maintenance on equipment, all the while trying to wholesale root crops. Many things not done: fall pruning of raspberries and blueberries. We will have to switch gears this week and start focusing on 2018. Tax counseling on Monday will give us a first real look at farm financial health, the winners and losers.

As I get older, I wrestle with something I once said about our motto being "Edgewater Farm; we work harder, not smarter." I said it in jest, but now I wonder if we are doing things (crops, enterprises, marketing) that may not be as healthy as we think they are. Hopefully this winter we can investigate and think about them from a business perspective. For example, in the last 10 years I have not been a fan of the Pick Your Own side of the strawberries. I even advocated ending it, especially after the original FSMA guidance was sent out in 2013. But in talking it over with others and looking at the figures that feeling is not borne out. PYO can be quite profitable for us, and it should continue to be a component of our total strawberry program. This info is important medicine, even if it is hard to swallow.

Additionally, we are moving to transition ownership to the next generation, a project that has been going on for three years but mo

Staff development and hiring practices greatly improved this year, or maybe we just got lucky in the folks we chose? Our Jamaican farmer friends are still the full-season backbone for us, but we had a great local crew and we all know what a gift that is when the weather turns shitty and things get tough. I won't say we have it dialed in, but it was a good year. Returning employees are key to anchoring the force, a fact that is not lost on any growers who hires more than two employees.

As we have expanded there seems to be more compartmentalization here. Although I used to love being more involved on the ornamental side of things, it runs well enough without me. My responsibilities have changed, and I mainly propagate the seed and vegetative cuttings. The increased size of the vegetable enterprise finds me spending more time there.

We spent more time utilizing crop consultants and vendors as well as the usual suspects at Extension. It has helped us make better choices in terms of pest control and soil fertility for the wide variety of vegetable, small fruit and ornamental crops that we grow. I tried to use a streamlined very general nutrient management plan for several years, but with the specialist's contributions we are better able to specifically target crop needs for improved plant vigor as well as doing a better job of keeping up with changing insect and disease pressure.

For years now, when we are busy shifting from one season to the next (summer to winter production) we would rip out the tomatoes and let the ground dry out too much during the two week shift to winter production. This creates a dead zone in the surface microbes! The one thing the new generation of no-till farmers will tell you is always keep your soil biology protected by always having something growing in it. I would add if you can't put a cover crop down, at least don't let your soil moisture evaporate. To this point, we are setting up special sprinklers and drip in all our winter production because the dry winter air dries the soil quickly. We are also utilizing large silage tarps to hold moisture in the ground if we can't get plants in right away.