

Vermont Vegetable and Berry News February 1, 2021
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REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

(Westminster West) Here we go again! First trays of seeded strawberries are up and many herb trays seeded on the heated propagation benches. Increasing production a little bit over last year as we do get maxed out labor-wise. All the crew is returning including the delivery driver, so very grateful for our good fortune.

Just ordered some new potato equipment from Poland, seem like good value for the money and a dealer network here for parts which is always important. Some other upgrades underway as well as winter repairs keeping me busy. No winter vacation this year, stay at home and stay busy is fine, doing more innovative cooking now, I should try making bread! Still unsure how the farmers market will function this year. We didn't because of Covid concerns and not sure what it will be like this spring and summer, so hard to make plans. Good snow cover here, so hoping garlic is happy and already anxious to see them emerge!

(Jericho) This has been our busiest January ever, setting records for winter roots and greens sold per week, with the last week of January bringing us an all-time record for the farm. We are happy to "make hay while the sun shines" but missing our winter hibernation period. At least the skiing is good! The mild fall resulted in bounteous winter greens, and we are still harvesting fresh greens every week for our CSA and farmstand.

After several winter growing seasons experimenting with different planting dates and being foiled by Mother Nature with warm sunny falls followed by cold cloudy falls, we have given up trying to get it just right and decided earlier planting is just better, even if the greens do get too big too fast in the fall. It's more profitable to cut them earlier and overlap a mild extended field season than to not have them size up at all, and often if they size up too much we can sell them as a different/bigger-leafed product and make it work that way.

First tomatoes are seeded and up, ready for grafting in a couple weeks. Started the tomatoes this year in the very first cooler we built for the farm, which is basically just a well-insulated room, and given its small size and tightness we're finding the grow lights themselves give enough heat to keep it warm all day, just needs a small space heater at night when lights are off. Enjoying the bright sun and lengthening days and looking forward to a rocking 2021!

(Newbury) We just this week harvested the last of our beet greens from under the snow. Still digging beets, starting alliums, celery and celeriac this week.

(Alburgh) Still pretty quiet time of year with no greenhouse going yet. One note of interest: Tetsukabuto squash from JSS is still in perfect condition in storage. This is an interspecific hybrid between c. Maxima and c. Moschata with huge yield (30,000 to 40,000 lbs/acre), high brix, and excellent eating quality. But the big thing is storage! The last 200 cartons we packed had just one bad squash. I'm thinking it will last well into April. And customers love it.

(Elmore) Out winter tunnels are holding up well and our peach trees inside look good as do our remaining greens and cuttings beds and seedling beds. It has been a difficult winter of store buyers not getting back to us to reorder our black walnuts, jam or frozen blueberries, which is surprising and frustrating. We have the products people want but it is sometimes hard to get the food to the people. We have tried front porch forum and selling directly to customers this winter and this has had some success.

Feb 1, 12-2 pm: Developing an Onboarding Plan for Seasonal Workers
Feb 5, 12-2:30 pm: Show Me the Money (Funding Opportunities)
Feb 9, 10-11 am: Food Safety Best Practices for Pick-Your-Own Fruit Farms
Feb 11, 9-10:30 am: Virtual Farm Stand Tours
Feb 16, 10 am-12 pm: Listeria in the Apple Packing Environment
Feb 17, 9:45-11:45 am: Sweet Potato Webinar
Feb 19, 12:45-2:15 pm: Vegetable Transplant Troubleshooter
Feb 23, 7:45-9:30 am: Strawberry Pest Management Workshop
Feb 24, 7:45-9:30 am: Raspberry/Blackberry Production Workshop
Feb 25, 7:45-9:30 am: Managing Blueberry Pests
Feb 26, 12:30-2:30 pm: Sweet Corn Webinar