

Vermont Vegetable and Berry News February 15, 2011 Compiled by Vern Grubinger, University of Vermont Extension

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http://www.uvm.edu/vtvegandberry

REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

(Montpelier)

(Enfield NH) Not much growing yet in the two un-heated greenhouses planted to greens. Starting to thaw with recent "warmth", but no growth yet. Will be starting onion family crops in 3 to 4 weeks. Still mostly planning and considering what changes to make for the 2011 season.

(Shelburne) We are getting flats of kale, chard, escarole, spinach, and lettuce ready to transplant into our hoophouse, hopefully in two weeks. We ate the sweetest, most tender kale from the hoophouse last week. I wish we had gotten the plastic on before November so the kale, chard, spinach that is in there was 4 times as bigi next year. We will be direct seeding next week as well: carrots, beets, salad mix, and spinach. I have never had to shovel around a hoophouse, and we have already done it 3 times this year and it needs it again!

(Jericho) Huge demand for local food this winter - gets better every year! We have seen consistent sales at the Burlington Winter Farmers Market. Going to twice per month has increased sales for agricultural vendors. Wholesale markets remain strong, blew through our root crops this winter, now have to save the rest for our Spring CSA which is filling fast. Winter greens in hoophouses starting to take off (arugula, mesclun, spinach). Looking forward to March transplanting. Experimenting with low tunnels this year (Coleman method). Currently have carrots, spinach, onions, mache, arugula, and swiss chard that we seeded in the fall under those tunnels. These are covered with row cover and 4 mil construction plastic over bended 1/2 inch EMT pipe spaced 5 ft apart. Low tunnels holding up well with all the snow this year. Eager to see what the crops look like this spring, though March looks to be a long melt out.

(Salisbury NH) Using cheap mouse traps under small cardboard boxes to catch voles and field mice in the high tunnel, after we had some transplanted broccoli chewed to stubs. With row covers things were hidden and when we took them off we had lots of bare dirt without plants. Might have been because we didn't plant in time, and some crops were just a trial. The radishes (Cheriette) and Hakurei turnips were a test and lasted through late December/early January. The Bulls Blood beets, Tyee spinach, Napoli carrots all sprouted and we were hoping they'd take off with mid-February light. Not sure if the rodents ate the beets and spinach but they're gone, though the carrots are there. Soil looks really dry so we watered a little k \Utiligitaria left. Allstar and Wildfire lettuce mixes held up well; planted late and too small to harvest through winter but leaves look nice to begin growth soon. Spectrums Greens mix looked good up until a few weeks ago but leaves look burned; a surprise since a lot of this mix is Brassicas we thought would be hardier. Winter Density lettuce died pretty quickly in December (before we even put row covers on); 7-Green spinach planted on 9/3/10 has held up well.

(Grande Isle) We want to pass along two items that might be helpful on your farm: 1. In the search for a good and long lasting tape to fix any tears in plastic greenhouses, we find the best is something called Green Guard. It is clear with green writing with the company logo on it and it withstands the effects of sun exposure and moisture in a far superior way than the tape that big greenhouse companies sell. It is made for taping sheets of foam together when insulating homes so it can be purchased at building supply places. It is expensive but we feel worth the cost if you can get another year out of your plastic.

Our solution for this problem was to use a clam shell (natural substance with no static electricity) to hold your pile of small seeds and then a pencil lead to drop (push) the seeds individually. With a little practice, you can proceed at a fairly quick clip. The clam shell is key to this process.

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