

Vermont Vegetable and Berry News – February 21, 2017
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REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

(Shelburne) Here at Bread & Butter Farm we have 10,000 sq. ft. of winter greens. We are focusing this year in kale, collards, chard, spinach, cilantro, parsley, salanova and scallions. We had a mystery pest issue in the fall with our spinach and discovered that we have symphylans eating the root systems of our spinach plants which has severely stunted about 1/3 of our spinach crop. This has been a major financial hit. We are strategizing about how to move forward with these critters. Not many growers in the Northeast have had these at a level that has hurt their crops so we are just figuring it out. If anyone has dealt with these and has any strategies they want to share, we would love to hear. We have very high organic matter in our heavy clay soils and we know that symphylans feed on high organic matter so not sure what to do about that. We are curious about fungal interactions with the symphylans and think if we can promote a carnivorous strain of fungus in our soils naturally, they may keep the symphylans in check. We found some papers from the west coast that support this theory. Otherwise, the rest of the crops are having a relatively good year given that it has been a normal temperature winter. Our chard lasted longer than usual, we are actually still harvesting the chard, down to the base at this point. We will finish harvesting and will then let it chill for the next month and then it will put on new growth again. The Brassicas are all nearly harvested but we are stretching out the final harvests to supply our winter CSA and excited for them to regrow here over the next 2-4 weeks. Parsley was stripped down about a month ago and we expect regrowth in that same time frame. Always thinking about what balance of crops is the best for us and always making adjustments as I go. I think I will do more scallions next year. I planted garlic in the hoop for the first time (since I had some space from spinach that failed in the fall), so we will see how early garlic in the houses do.

(Braintree) The Winter Spinach is re-growing nicely and quickly. Dodged the Downy Mildew bullet this time around. Spring Spinach, Onions, Scallions and Swiss Chard seedlings have all germinated evenly and are looking healthy. The root cellar is starting to finally empty out from last year's harvest. Still have some potatoes, carrots and cabbages hanging on... but not for long. Loving the stronger sun.

(S. Burlington) Teaching. Meeting. Ordering. Sorting. Scheming. Skiing. Brainstorming of sustainable efficiencies for year two of the farm. Irrigation. Mechanization. Black plastic. Doubling in size...praying for double the profit. Posted my 2017 internship description and application today! And pondering the legal realities of internships on a farm. Filled with community and power from NOFA conference and realities of migrant justice and empowerment of women and people of color in the agricultural movement. Onward to seed sorting, inventory, purchasing and reaching out for 2018 land leasing land opportunities. Hopefully one step ahead of myself until June 1 when I always feel a bit behind. Feeling blessed to be a young woman farmer in Vermont!

(Charlotte) We're still getting greens from the hoop house. Spinach, kale, mache, endive, and claytonia all have survived quite well. Starting to see a little regrowth. Arugula, mizuna, rouge

(Argyle NY) Pleasant Valley Farm. Another round of warm weather; we can hardly stand it! Growth of everything in the tunnels has been wonderful. Spinach was planted late last fall and now it is finally kicking in. Seven days late in planting does equate to 7 weeks late in harvesting. The downy mildew on the spinach seems to be on hold, due either to spraying Double Nickel, temp, and/or ventilation. The fall planted onions in the smaller tunnel (7' high) look really nice and will need irrigating this week. Unusually early. Lots of transplants are going in the tunnels now such as Asian greens, broccoli raab, spinach, and scallions. Seeding onions, leeks, shallots, lettuce, and parsley in the greenhouse. Root crops still look good coming out of the root cellar, some are waning right on time. Farmers' markets are strong, about average for us.

ORGANIC STRAWBERRY GROWERS SCHOOL

March 6, Lake Morey Resort, Fairlee VT. Topics to be covered: Fall-Planted Plugs, Plasticulture vs. Matted Row, Matted Row PYO Over the Years, Using Leaf Analysis to Guide Fertilization, Everbearers Under Low Tunnels, Growing in Haygrove Tunnels, Strawberry Varieties, and Organic Strawberry Costs and Returned Row PYO Over the Years