

(Charlotte) Pruning of the blueberries has been completed for the season! We are putting up sturdier trellises for the brambles. We will be getting ready to put in a new irrigation system for the farm which will be a big project for the spring.

(Westminster West) Several warm days last week had me worried about the acre of garlic under row cover, but some new snow and a return to cold weather allowed my worries to wait. Spring plantings in the greenhouses are moving along nicely; finally filled all indoor positions although still looking for another truck driver and equipment operator. Banker plants set up in open greenhouses and no insect or disease issues at this time. Huge wind storm did damage one greenhouse; a door wiggled open and allowed the wind to blow out a rear panel, that never happened before, gotta be more careful. Started doing a daily exercise regime to stretch and improve muscle tone for the season, best investment in time I've ever done!

(Plainfield NH) This past week has been the quiet before the storm. We have been prefilling pots and flats in anticipation of the rooted cuttings arriving in force this coming week. Putting up temp alarms in houses and making sure the furnaces are functioning properly. The advent of extreme cold on the back of the extreme warm weather pattern has been disquieting as there is minimal snow cover in the fields. In our prop house the plants are waking up with the increasing light levels, as well as the pest populations. We are seeing some aphid colonies as well as two-spotted spider mites numbers spike; we need to load the house up with beneficials to counter-act. Still hopeful about getting some blueberries pruned before bud break.

(Ange-Gardien, Quebec) Not much light these days. Radishes and spinach are up. Overwintering kale and spinach look good although a bit of tip burn from cold temp in winter. Cannot have enough winter green for the market.

UPDATE FROM THE UVM PLANT DIAGNOSTIC CLINIC

Ann Hazelrigg

We have seen leaf samples with *Cladosporium* in high tunnel spinach. Symptoms include small tan leafspots. This fungus disease likes cool moist conditions with temperatures between 59°-68°F and RH above 80%, but the fungus can grow from 41° to 86°F and can grow from 41° to 86°F (i)10(on)-7(s.)3(-)-37

On more spinach from the same farm, there was a smaller group of plants with no root systems. After putting in a moist chamber for a couple of days, we found mycelium (threads/roots of the fungus) on the crown tissue along with small hard tan sclerotia (hardened overwintering structures of the fungus made of compressed mycelia). They look like small mustard seeds. This is caused by a fungal disease called southern root rot, *Sclerotium rolfsii*. This soilborne fungus has a wide host range including corn, tomatoes, wheat, sweet potatoes, pumpkin and peanuts and usually is a problem in more southern areas. I have seen this same pathogen on stored beets in Vermont. The main symptoms are rots at the soil line. The fungus does not produce spores but persists near the soil surface as sclerotia or may be associated with plant debris. Sclerotia buried deep in the soil may survive for a year or less, whereas those at the surface remain viable and may germinate in response to alcohols and other volatiles released from decomposing plant material. Deep plowing serves as a cultural control tactic by burying sclerotia deep in the soil. High temperatures and moist conditions are associated with germination of sclerotia and high soil moisture, dense planting, and frequent irrigation promote infection. <https://projects.ncsu.edu/cals/course/pp728/Sclerotium/Srolfsii.html> and <http://www.apsnet.org/edcenter/intropp/lessons/fungi/basidiomycetes/pages/southernblight.aspx>

THREE WEEKS LEFT TO SIGN UP FOR CAPS

Community Accreditation for Produce Safety (CAPS) is a voluntary, practical approach to documenting the use of practices that reduce food safety risks. Open to all VVBGA members, from any state, the program helps you write a produce safety plan by responding to the prompts on the web site. To earn accreditation, you subsequently upload documents and pictures showing that you implemented your plan. These get stored in your on-line farm folder. The folders then get reviewed by a team of your peers before accreditation is granted and your CAPS "eBadge" and paper certificate are awarded. CAPS farmers can also choose to link their folders on the CAPS Share Page, which is an information resource of 'best practices.'

If you are new to CAPS, check out the web platform by starting a free account at <http://ciids.org/vvbga/farmer/>. If you then decide to use the CAPS platform, you must be a VVBGA member. Membership costs \$45 per farm, per year; join using this link: <https://2017vvbga.eventbrite.com>. You can then use CAPS to write a produce safety plan and create a farm folder, for free. If you want CAPS Accreditation, you need to draft (or revise) a produce safety plan by April 1 and pay the \$100 CAPS fee; financial and technical assistance is available. If you miss this deadline, you must wait till next year.

You will get feedback on your draft plan, then you have until June 1 to finalize it. During the growing season, you upload the six documents and images that show implementation of your plan. Your folder must be complete by Nov. 1, then

Remember that HAF fans work to mix the space (circulate the air) but don't significantly improve ventilation. HAF combined with roll up sides can do the trick, but the site is the key. There needs to be a steady cross breeze for any significant air exchange to occur.

STRAWBERRY GROWER SCHOOL PRESENTATIONS

These are posted