

**Vermont Vegetable and Berry News – April 14, 2020** view how markets may be. F  
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## **ESSENTIAL FARM BUSINESS: SUMMARY OF GUIDANCE**

The Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development developed guidance about which types of agricultural operations are currently allowed to operate during the pandemic. See: <https://accd.vermont.gov/content/stay-home-stay-safe-sector-specific-guidance>

While farming and supplying the agricultural industry for ongoing food production is essential, providing plants to household consumers is not deemed essential. Businesses are not currently allowed to provide those services with any in-person contact with or between employees and/or customers.

Farm stands and CSAs are allowed to operate but only with appropriate physical distancing practices in place. Food retail is also required to use phone or online orders and delivery or curbside pick-up to the extent possible. Here is guidance for these and other “essential” retail operations:  
<https://accd.vermont.gov/sites/accdnew/files/documents/Stay-Home-Stay-Safe-Guidance-for-Retailers.pdf>

Farmers’ markets are currently NOT essential services, so they are not permitted to operate with person-to-person contact. The State continues to review how markets may be able to operate in the near future.

Greenhouses and nurseries: 1) those used to area



## **APRIL 30 DEADLINE TO SUBMIT CAPS PRODUCE SAFETY PLAN**

Community Accreditation for Produce Safety is the Vermont Vegetable and Berry Grower Association's food safety accreditation program, see:

<https://practicalproducesafetyvt.wordpress.com/>

Designed by growers and administered by UVM Extension, it is now in its seventh year, and is transitioning to a new and improved web platform at: <https://vrbga.org/produce-safety-caps>

Last year, 125 farms earned accreditation by writing or updating their farm's food safety plan, then uploading the straightforward information to show that they implemented it. Another 50 or so farms simply used the CAPS site to write a plan, but decided not to get accredited. Either way, CAPS can help you reduce risk, improve efficiency, and reinforce customer confidence in your practices. To use CAPS, you must be a VVBGA member (\$70 per farm per year). The accreditation fee is only \$100, thanks to financial support from grants and gifts. Scholarships are available. To join the VVBGA and enroll in CAPS, go to: <https://2020vrbga.eventbrite.com>

If you would like to preview the CAPS system prior to enrolling, or if you have other questions, contact Hans Estrin at [hestrin@uvm.edu](mailto:hestrin@uvm.edu) or 802-380- 2109.

## **MUMMYBERRY MANAGEMENT IS ABOUT PREVENTION**

(adapted from Michigan State Univ. and others)

About the time forsythia blooms you should scout under your blueberry bushes for mummy berry mummies. They look like tiny, black pumpkins about 1/3 inch in diameter and may be partially embedded in the soil or underneath leaf litter. Germinated mummies have small brown finger-like projections that develop into little mushrooms (apothecia) that look like small brown trumpets or goblets. There can be anywhere from one to six or seven apothecia on a mummy. Germination is heavily influenced by soil moisture: in a wet spring, there may be up to 40 percent germination and in dry fields or dry years, only about 5-10 percent of mummies may germinate. Mummies can survive at least two years, but once they germinate, they die.

Apothecia can become dime-sized under the right conditions and can discharge millions of spores into the air per day. The greater the number of ascospores released the higher the infection risk, so minimizing their number is important. The wettest sites or areas in the field are at the highest risk. Ascospores are windborne and theoretically can travel at least a mile on the wind but most travel only 30-100 feet from the source.

You can cultivate to pile soil/mulch towards the base of the bushes (where mummies often

The earlier you remove the straw mulch, the earlier fruit will mature, which may necessitate more frost protection. For early springs, growers may delay straw removal in order to delay flowering, and harvest. In late springs, there is a danger of leaving straw on too long. A study conducted years ago (by Bertie Boyce at UVM) in New England compared straw removal over a six-week period. The highest yields came from plants that were uncovered earliest in spring; the later the straw was removed, the more yield was reduced.

A light layer of straw, about an inch thick, can be left on the plants. Leaves and flowers can grow up through this thin layer and it may help reduce disease problems later in the season and will also help prevent some weed seeds from germinating if bare soil is exposed to sunlight. Lastly, mulch removal just prior to a rain event helps the plants respond well and keeps the mulch in place.

## **HIGH TUNNEL SOIL TESTING REMINDER**

In established tunnels with relatively high organic matter (compared to the field) it is helpful to use the Saturated Media Extract (SME) test, as well as the regular field soil test (modified Morgan's extract.) The SME test measures water-soluble, immediately available nutrients and the field soil test measures nutrients in reserve, extracted with a weak acid. Both tests measure soil pH and organic matter, but the SME test results also include soluble salts and available N which are important measures for greenhouse soils and potting mixes.

Make sure your mix or soil has been moist and warm (room temperature) for at least a week. Send a pint (not a cup as for field soil test) to the soil test lab. The UMaine soil test lab runs both these tests for \$30, calling it the "long-term high tunnel test." See: <http://anlab.umesci.maine.edu/>

## **HOMEMADE FACEMASK OPTIONS**

Chris Callahan, UVM Extension Agricultural Engineer

**Wear a Face Mask (NEW).** The FDA and CDC are [now recommending](#) the use of simple cloth face masks as a voluntary public health measure in public settings where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain. These are not meant to be N95 masks, and they are not meant to protect the wearer. They are meant to limit the transmission of COVID-19 from the wearer who may be asymptomatic. Consider making one of several homemade cloth masks (see below) and distributing to employees who may need them. [More info available from Penn State.](#)

### **No Sew Options.**

CDC: How to Make your Own Face Covering  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tPx1yqvJgf4&feature=youtu.be>

Japanese Creations: Pleated Face Mask with Handkerchief  
<http://blog.japanesecreations.com/no-sew-face-mask-with-handkerchief-and-hair-tie>

**Easy Sewing, Gets the Job Done.**