Vermont Vegetable and Berry News May 20, 2014 compiled by Vern Grubinger, University of Vermont Extension (802) 257-7967 ext. 303, vernon.grubinger@uvm.edu www.uvm.edu/vtvegandberry

REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

(Dummerston) The early crops got a late start this year and the heat-loving crops are out early. We've transplanted the field tomatoes already though I might have to run out this evening and add a few more row covers. I had to postpone the start of the CSA harvest season for the first time in 13 years. But all the little greens for the first pick-up are coming along well. Unfortunately so are the weeds. I sealed up all my brassica greens under row covers to keep the flea beetles out and now there's lots of crab grass sprouting under the covers. I'm going to have to pull out all the covers and weed soon before that grass becomes an impenetrable mat. Strawberries are flowering nicely -- time to go cover then in case it frosts.

(Westminster West) Sales are finally returning to normal after the worst April in several years

crop; very few non emerging cloves. Got a late start on planting our field onions due to wet soil on our lower fields but will have them all in a day or so. New 4WD tractor is allowing me to plow much better and quicker than my old 34-year old tractor; engine is much quieter than I

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that perfect day to go to market I guess. Potatoes go in next and just finished seeding 5,000 plugs of winter squash for setting out in 2 weeks with our new water wheel transplanter. Labor

(Rochester) Looks like we will escape a killing frost this spring. We had a 27 degree night early in May but the blueberries had not bloomed at that point and we had no damage. Pruning is done, bumblebees have arrived, and planting is about to start. We are full of hope for a strong season.

(Randolph Center) This spring we worked to cross as many t's and dot as many i's as possible in the fields in the event that we repeat last year's onslaught of precipitation. Last year, as we lost crops one by one, I worried that the little details that had been overlooked for the past few decades were compounding the issues brought on by the regular heavy rains. So this year we've subsoiled every tilled acre, rotated nearly every crop, no-till seeded some land back to hay, turned over some sod, worked toward optimum levels of all nutrients on the soil tests (which induded a serious dose of lime) and have a full arsenal of pest fighting tools on hand. Going through the sprayers and making sure they're set to roll is left to do. I will sleep better knowing that we've attempted everything we can to meet the crop's needs if they're pushed to the limit again this year. I am also laying the groundwork to be setup for planting corn and fall cucurbits with zone-till in 2015. Preparing to deal with crop residue without tillage, effective weed control strategies and finding the right coulter setup for my John Deere planter are priorities to make this happen.

(Burlington) Finally a few days of sun have things moving outside and in. Lots of crop in the ground, almost back on our planting schedule after weather delays. Happy last fall with our cover crops, but not so happy with our vetch overwintering, a lot of spotty re-growth in our oatvetch plantings which are usually the best. It seems to correlate with areas that had standing water at some point. Our typically wetter fields with fewer low spots had better survival, which surprised me, since I always though soil type drove a lot of the overwintering success. Paying more attention to fertility this year, and spreading more of our organic fertilizer pre- and atplanting, with minimal side dressing planned.

(Fairfax) We invested in greenhouse controllers this year, primarily to control humidity and for using DIF with our bedding plants. Once we got them going were loving them. With John Satz and Andy Knafel's advice we went with igrow 400's. Very nice with lots of controls, for DIF, roof and side vents, ventilation fans etc. They are a bit pricey at \$1500, but very well built. Realizing I have houses with just ventilation fans and single heaters, wanted to see if there was any controllers that were less expensive where I could set humidity levels and day and night temps. There are lots out there, primarily designed for growth rooms but they do work for greenhouses. We tried Autopilot controllers. They are cheap approx. \$200 and can control temp., humidity and CO2. They are not much more than a couple of thermostats.

We went with the Autopilots because they included an external humidity and temp. sensor, although with only 15 ft. of wire. At least I can get it at crop level. So far they have worked great. We will see how long they last. With all the sensor and digital technology getting less

humidity and Botrytis issues. Other than that things are finally starting to grow, still no bloom

(Plainfield NH) A welcome rain blew through this past weekend and allowed us to lay a bunch of plastic and get planting really under way on what has been a very late and slow season for us. Whereas the strawberries are full bloom in the southern part of NH, we are barely out of popcorn stage. Had a thrips issue with INSV early on with grafted heirlooms a while back, but seem to have all the bad boys rouged out and GH tomatoes are really kicking into high gear. Blueberry fruit set looks very good, so we pruned a little more aggressively this year, and raspberries look good as well. Sales very slow in retail greenhouses, but much improved since

BEGINNING FARMER SUPPORT AVAILABLE

The Intervale Center offers production technical assistance, financial coaching, marketing coaching, business planning, and other support at various levels for farmers in their first 10 years of operation. Space is available for aspiring farmers or current farmers who are interested in receiving this kind of support in 2014. To enroll or find out more contact Maggie Donin at maggie@intervale.org or (802) 660-0440 x116.

DRIP IRRIGATION WORKSHOP June 3 from 4-7 pm

Location: Walker Farm, 1190 USRoute 5, East Dummerston, VT 05346. Trevor Hardy of

designers, will walk us through the basics of drip irrigation in the field and greenhouses. Specific topics include: Design, layout, and component selection; Determining water requirements and irrigation scheduling; Operation and maintenance of the system; Fertigation for efficient nutrient applications. Ginger Nickerson, UVM Extension Produce Safety and GAPs Coordinator, will discuss source water sampling protocol and how drip irrigation fits into a produce safety plan. There is no charge but please register at:

https://www.eventbrite.com/e/micro-irrigation-workshop-tickets-11647787847

2014 ON-FARM WORKSHOPS

Mark your calendars for these events, sponsored by NOFA-VT, VVBGA, UVM Extension and USDA Risk Management Agency. The fee is \$10 per workshop for NOFA or VVBGA members, \$20 for others, details coming soon.

-July 16 at 5pm. Make-it or Break-it with Mid-Summer Organic Storage Crops. Burnt Rock Farm, Huntington, VT

-July 31 at 5pm. Profitable Small Acreage Production. High Ledge Farm, South Woodbury, VT

-August 11 at 5pm. Do's and Don'ts of Establishing a Commercial Blueberry Stand. Waterman Berry Farm, Johnson, VT

-August 14 at 3:30 pm. Pest and Disease ID and Scouting. High Mowing Farm, Putney, VT -August 27 at 2 pm. Tractors, Tools, and Tricks for Mechanical Oultivation. Diggers' Mirth Collective Farm, Burlington, VT

-September 9 at 4:30pm. Behind the Scenes at Kilpatrick Family Farm. Granville, NY

-September 30 at 4pm. Season Extension and Winter Storage at Luna Bleu Farm. South Royalton, VT