



Vermont Vegetable and Berry News May 5, 2015

Started picking really nice over-wintered field spinach; planted really late in the fall to keep small. Cukes, Zukes and Summers going out this week with first corn transplants nearly ready. Bedding and veggie plant sales picking up with the nice weather last weekend, and looking forward to next when we have some workshops for customers. Working on growing our own nitrogen with several acres in rye/vetch and new plantings of pea/oats. Having good results with peas seeded into overwintered rye and cuffed in with light rotovating. Rain would help everything; already using irrigation more than usual for this time of year.

(Elmore) Hundreds of pear trees are pushing out their flowers, apricots in blossom. Very early for us and very very dry. New spinach is up but no asparagus yet. Worst winter injury in a long time to all marginal fruits. Shows us that while our climate may be getting warmer it is not getting any less cold in the winter even with plenty of snow cover. The most deer chewing I have ever noticed on our tree tips. The advantage is we do not have to feed our trees this spring as the multitudes of deer have fertilized them nicely. Too much to do. Everyday I am very grateful for my crew.

(Plainfield NH) We continue to climate surf by irrigating our sandy soils to encourage strawberries to leaf out and the direct seeded vegetables to germinate. Two weeks ago snow was falling on them. All the field work that could have been done in mid-April

(Dresden ME) Field prep is well underway with a little over 8 acres tilled. Peas made it in the ground about two weeks ago, first planting of carrots and greens close behind. We are a bit worried about low soil moisture levels and how this might influence germination. Our onions and shallots are transplanted into black (for early onions) and silver plastic mulch. The onion starts looked great this year with regular fish emulsions and clipping with a hedge trimmer. In our asparagus we are trying a combination of flame weeding and shallow rototilling (pre emergence) above crowns for weed control. We are also experimenting with straw mulch on several beds. We had a close call with the flame weeder and the dry asparagus ferns. It got pretty exciting for a second or two! We pack a pump sprayer for these situations, and though at times we felt a bit outgunned the flames were quelled. Potted tomato plants have first blossoms showing. There was concern about ammonia levels generated by unfinished compost. It s crazy to think that tomato trellising and pruning is high on the list of things to do. We are transitioning unheated winter greens tunnels to tomatoes starting this week.

We have a solid team of draft horses to integrate into the farm system. They are grazing the winter rye and vetch to cut down on the hay bill and stimulate tillering. Then we4(oeht)-3(a)bx a-6(a)-5(g)10(us

Lots of crown spinach mites all of a sudden this week, but all tunnels were 99% insect and disease free all winter. We brought in ladybugs in early April to keep aphids under control. We made two field seedings of carrots, beets, spinach, herbs, arugula, peas and radishes. Did our first tractor cultivation today on all seedings and transplants- seems like summer! Tarnished plant bugs have been out for 2 weeks and just saw our first flea beetles so covered the arugula with Biothrips netting (25 gram, which we like for no heat buildup and visibility of the crop). Annual bed Chandler strawberries are flowering and the plants look great, on track to start production the last week of May. Forum and Bridger onions planted out in early November in a low 6' high x14' wide tunnel look fantastic and we are on our final crates of storage winter and red onions from last fall, so not much break in onions for customers. Winter farmers' markets were up a bit from last winter and our opening summer day was normal sales for May. Our diversity with the root cellar plus tunnels gives us over 27 diff items to sell, including fresh dug