

Vermont Vegetable and Berry News ó June 16, 2014
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REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

(Middlebury) We tried some new inter-plantings this spring in order to give our zucchini and summer squash more room once they are mature. The preliminary results have been interesting. We planted all the zucchinis three feet apart in one row on black plastic; early beginning of May and even one on April 20. In between we either did baby bok choy, napa cabbage, green beans, lettuce or celery. Covered it all with hoops and remay. Bok Choi was a big winner, huge beautiful, blemish free and the zucchini appears unaffected. Just wish more people ate it. The lettuce was indifferent. It looked pretty much the same as the same generation stuff under hoops but with no black plastic in the field; zucchinis unaffected. Celery has not done much yet, but the idea was that it would grow slowly shaded by zucchinis to create a blanched tender stalk. Interestingly, the beans, direct seeded at the time of transplanting zucchinis, are getting devoured by striped cucumber beetles. The napa planted three across every three feet in between is amazing. They are probably going to weigh five pounds each and have very little bug damage. The interesting thing with that mix is that the zucchini is looking a month older than it is. I think the napa stole all the nutrients. We will see what happens when we harvest the napa this week. We will give the zucchini some fish fertigation and see if it will bounce back. It is not diseased they just look yellow and the fruit is funny shaped. Typical of the partenon variety, just a month earlier than normal.

(Newport Center) Awoke to what had been considered a top contender for best garlic crop to find many pushed over due to rain and significant wind. Tops are very large, perhaps the recent lack of rain played a part in this. Planning to heel them in and hope for the best. Unusual event after growing stiffneck garlic for over 10 years in northern VT.

(Burlington) Spring harvest is looking good, mostly on track, though strawberries and other perennials are later than usual. Summer CSA opened this week and our many members are happy to back on the farm and out in the fields. We finally cracked our parking problems a few years ago with an athletic field lime striper. Now our staff baseball fan lays out a tidy set up regulation-sized spaces in our gravel and grass lot and we can squeeze in many more cars without needing to watch to make sure everyone is behaving.

Our members are generally not very trainable, but they are creatures of habit, and everyone has used parking spaces since they first received their licenses. Much more successful than signs, marking the edges of the fields with flags, hiring a high school kid as an attendant, and all of the touchup will do the trick. Plus, it keeps the pH of the parking lot from plummeting.

(Montpelier) Late start to the season but everything is moving right along. Final plantings going in. Tomatoes took much better this year I think in large part to the later start date resulting in warmer soil in the greenhouses. Symphlans continue to be a very vexing issue in all three houses. Removing the soil is probably not the solution as they can move down up to 8 feet based on reading we have done. The next step is to bring in 75 yards of sand and start adding it into the beds to drastically lower the organic matter. Also, it seems that grafted plants can outgrow them. May have to move to all grafted for next year. Cucumber beetles seem to be in fine health this season. Mexican bean beetles are doing a job in the tomatillos. Trying to stay after them. Flea beetles are out but not as bad as last year. First woodchuck sighting the other day. Deer are abundant but respecting the fence for now.

(Westminster West) Still playing catch up here from the slow start, very saturated fields. I rented an excavator last week and cut about 600' of deep ditches and started setting drainage pipe to help drain what's already here and to prevent future flooding from heavy rains. So far, it seems to be helping and will finish planting the 3 acres of squash sets tomorrow. Already have 2 acre under Remay, without wires by the way. Onions and garlic can use some weeding between the raised plastic beds and after the planting is done tomorrow we will start tractoring those weeds to death! The onions and garlic are looking great. Tunnel tomatoes are going nuts; trying red plastic mulch this year, at least it looks pretty! Field potatoes coming up nice. The rain is good for lots of things once you can get them in. Cover crop of field peas planted last year and went to seed and reseeded themselves this spring are looking totally amazing! Almost 3' tall and super thick stand. I will leave this field alone and see what happens. Greenhouse raspberries are fruiting and look super. Sales at farmers market holding steady with our herb and perennial plants still popular. Wholesale starting to seasonally slow down, and we are glad it is as we are quite exhausted from the pace at this point and the crew loves getting into the fields to play with veggies. Enjoyed the field drip irrigation workshop at Walker Farm in Dummerston last week; these workshops are the best source of farm skills and knowledge that I know of and more people should make an effort to get out there and take advantage of the skills being offered.

(Rochester) The effects of the cold winter are showing up in the younger blueberry canes; some died back during the warmer spells and others have produced plenty of fruit but hardly any leaves. I hope this is only the effect of cold and not something worse. The oldest raspberries, vulnerable to die back in recent years, are surviving so far but they have not been seriously tested

by the demands of hot weather yet. A couple of inches of rain right after planting seems to have been congenial to the brambles which are sending up good shoots for the most part.

(Argyle

Lots of cukes are resistant, but watch for damage on summer and winter squash, true and other pumpkin types, muskmelon and cantaloupe, and gourds. The fungus attacks anything above ground but will make the fruit unmarketable. You can usually see the velvety green spores on the fruit lesions.

Cercospora leafspot on beets, spinach, chard, likely to show up.