

Vermont Vegetable and Berry News June 3, 2024
Compiled by Vern Grubinger, University of Vermont Extension
(802) 656-7534, vernon.grubinger@uvm.edu

Potatoes are up and have received two fine weddings to date. The hillier will have to get dusted off within a week, which is ahead of schedule. Our onion crop has been startlingly slow to grow, in a remote field that had a cover crop of red clover last year. I've been scratching my head trying to figure out what is going on, but no answers or even good leads, yet.

(Burlington) First summer CSA pickups this week all filled up despite our July 2023 flooding travesty. Our dedicated members are our biggest asset besides our staff, without question.

Normal early June green things (baby salad, head lettuce, spinach) are looking good, and I am happy that our tunnel cukes are producing on the early side. I always wonder how much of the 'bounty' element of a CSA share is really about having the veggies that people want most, more than large quantities. Clearly, each contributes to a sense of abundance, but our early tunnel cucumbers, a very popular item, definitely helps our sense of abundance in the early weeks.

For a not notably hot spring, and with no change in our planting dates and approaches, we are about to start picking our earliest field Zucchini this week. Go figure. Looking forward to a soaking rain so we can seed out 5-6 acres of a Sudangrass - sunn hemp cover crop mix. We haven't been suppressing weeds well in our clover mixes in fields where we have a chickweed seedbank, so we are moving to something more weed-competitive.

(Orwell) We are experimenting with some new types of clips for tunnel tomatoes in an effort to reduce the use of plastic. Potato aphids continue to be a challenge, although timely releases of beneficials and spot spraying is helping. We're continuing to experiment with soil building in tunnels, trying additions of chopped mulch, wood chips, and composted manure. Seeing some good soil improvements but also some N tie up where wood chips are heavy. Hoping we can catch up on work and clean up loose ends as summer helpers ramp up.

(Greenfield Center NY) New Experience: extremely mild winter led to extreme early asparagus beetle pressure in asparagus. Count was what I would expect mid-summer. Not quite prepared. Next new experience: Botrytis in blueberries. Subsequent dry weather helped. Note to self: be more proactive managing disease.

Would like to point out that Laura Griffin McDermott, our long-time Extension berry specialist here in eastern NY, is retiring. She is the friendly face that panicked farmers have welcomed seeing for many years. We will miss you, Laura! Best wishes going forward.

(Saratoga Springs NY) We are seeing an abundance of pests this year: cucumber beetles, Colorado potato beetles, cutworms (especially in cabbage), flea beetles, hornworm moths and a ton of voles and rabbits. The weeds and grasses are growing like crazy; it's hard to keep up. Forum sets are vernalizing a lot more than usual, which is a bummer. All of our nightshades are planted as of today (finally). Cucumbers, squash and potatoes look good so far. Plant and vegetable sales have been strong at market despite an unexpected move. We're tired, but managing!

(Plainfield NH) Our spring has been pleasant, a bit on the cool and dry side. First round of everything is in the field, the strawberries are about 2 weeks from letting loose, and all the H2A help is finally here. A bit of leek moth damage in the garlic was diagnosed and dealt with, and a bit of shoot strike in one area of the blueberries.

We are irrigating a lot at this point; fortunately no brutally hot weather so the transplants have not suffered. Starting to set up deer fencing as they are in the woods and field edges everywhere at this point, even in daylight. I think the clover that we use in living mulches and cover crops is helping us at this point, providing plenty of preferable food, but I am worrying about the beans this week.

B

Test results provided by the Dairy One lab come with Cornell fertility recommendations for fruit; cost is \$30 per sample. <https://dairyone.com/services/forage-laboratory-services/plant-tissue-analysis/>

POLLINATOR SUPPORT REPORT

Laura Johnson, UVM Extension

blueberry pollinators and pests across 10 Vermont farms.

A few (native) bumblebee species are doing a lot of the pollination, and we seen lots of large bumblebee queens collecting pollen to bring back to their nests to feed developing bumblebee larvae. Last week, the larvae began to hatch and emerge as worker bumblebees. Workers look the same as the queens, but about half the size; they collect pollen as well.

Several species of (native) mining bees are also hard at work pollinating blueberry blossoms. At farms with hives, lots of honeybees are out visiting blueberries.

L

PRE-HARVEST AGRICULTURAL WATER UPDATE FOR PRODUCE FARMS