

August 8, 2020

Pest Alerts: **Onion**— good drying weather out in the field— leave a few inches of tops and bring into a barn or shaded greenhouse for drying; **Basil downy mildew** now becoming widespread; new generation of **brassica flea beetles** out, protect younger fall crop plants; **cucurbit downy mildew** reported in West Kingston, coming to a patch near you— time to be using targeted fungicides; **Yellow vine decline** was found in CT— bacterial disease spread by squash bugs; **eggplant** issues abound, including **hopper burn**, **two-spotted spider mite**, **potato flea beetles**, **verticillium wilt**; **broad mite** infestations seen in peppers in the field in NY; **bacterial leaf spot** in bell and hot peppers; **broad mite** damage on tomato fruit (russeted skin) in NH; **stink bug** damage on **tomato fruit**; heavy **sap beetles** in sweet corn; water stress could cause poor kernel filling in sweet corn

The Latest COVID-19 Resources: <https://web.uri.edu/coopext/coronavirus-resources/>

--> Need to discuss? Got something you need looked at? URI Extension: 401-874-2967/andy_radin@uri.edu, hfaubert@uri.edu



A dog and his tomatoes... well, really they are Confreda Farms tomatoes, third planting, for September to early October sales.



Green stink bug feeding damage

Update from Middletown: Steaming Towards Fall. Full Speed Ahead

[Huge Thanks, once again, to Michelle and Jim Garman in Middletown for their excellent updates! Great insights, great farmers.]

Hello from Aquidneck Island! We are having a pretty good “high season” here, with plenty of tomatoes, eggplant, and a rare (for us) solid succession of squash and zucchini. Winter squash is chugging along, but yields look like they may be a little lower than previous years, possibly due to drought stress. “Sweet REBA” acorn squash has generally put out four to five squash per plant; it’s looking more like three to four this year. “Bush Delicata” is in the same boat, although the heat has not stopped “Orangetti”, an unusually early 70-day spaghetti squash from High Mowing, which is pumping them out even as the vines go into decline. Spaghetti squash is not really one of our favorites, but it is hugely popular with CSA members, and it is interesting to be able to give them the squash and the tomatoes to make the sauce at the same time.

Fall planting is close to done here, and we have a little time to get ahead on clean-up and cover cropping. Spring-planted chard, sprouting broccoli, and kale are all moving out and being replaced with oats. Speaking of chard, “Silverado”, also from High Mowing, was a really good variety, showing no signs of *Cercospora*, although nine out of ten earwigs enjoyed it as much as we did. [Note: We will be trialing the bio-fungicide Stargus for *Cercospora* control on a new planting of fall beets at URI... stay tuned.]

Potato foliage on the early and mid-season varieties went down fast this year, despite adequate water and fertilizer. We attribute this to an overwhelming infestation of potato leafhopper and Colorado potato

beetle. It is sort of a relief to dig and store the potatoes so we don’t have to look at the plants any more.

Pests: potato flea beetle has re-appeared, mainly on eggplant. All variety of moths are everywhere, so we have all the fall plantings under row cover. It’s hard to say whether the next generation of cruciferous flea beetles are out and about, as we have no exposed brassicas, but here they generally re-appear now for a short time before disappearing in early September.



We would love to know if anyone has had good success in managing and marketing okra. We planted about 200 row feet of “Clemson Burgundy” (below) and it is a beautiful plant, but it has to be picked every day for a yield of maybe three or four pounds. Do you just need a lot more plants to make it a viable proposition? We will pickle some and ponder this over the winter. Hope you are not too exhausted and that your sales are all strong!

Your Input is Welcome

Please submit updates from your farm—a paragraph or two in an email is all it takes. Also, please submit suggestions for articles, meeting topics, and research needs from us at URI.



STAR FARMER: Roots Farm, Tiverton



Mike and Kelli Roberts grow certified organic vegetables in Tiverton, and are in their 10th year of production. Their farm is really their very large backyard on which they have a little less than 1.5 acres in production. They have permanent bed areas surrounded by grassy walkways and several high tunnels. All is very well tended.



Produce is distributed through Winter and Summer CSA, as well as through three farmers' markets. But their CSA distribution is more along the lines of a farm market, since they allow a free choice of produce options on any given week. As is the case with most CSA growers, their membership has expanded in 2020, ostensibly due to the COVID-19 pandemic.



Their operation has transitioned over the 10 years from a day-job supported side activity (they are both engineers) to a now full-time production. But their farm life is fully integrated with their domestic life, as I witnessed Mike hanging up the laundry during the middle of a busy work day.

As always, we (Heather and Andy) appreciate when they send us photographs of curiosities in the field. They've made good use of URI Cooperative Extension. You can too!



Above: newly germinated carrots; top right, Kelli with mature lettuce crop; middle right, living and farming in the backyard; right, high tunnel full of well-supported/trellised peppers.