



Department of Health
Agency of Human Services



Cause of Damage to Garden Produce Being Investigated

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BURLINGTON - The Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets is investigating reports of damage to fruits and vegetables grown in compost suspected to be contaminated with herbicide.

"Green Mountain Compost notified us about growth damage to some of their own produce and reported by a number of their customers," said Agrichemical Management Chief Cary Giguere.

Insects, disease, or last year's flooding are not suspected as the cause. "The damage that's been observed - cupped leaves, twisted stems, distorted growing points and reduced fruit set - is characteristic of damage from certain groups of herbicides, especially for sensitive plant such as tomatoes, peppers and beans," said Giguere.

Green Mountain Compost, working in consultation with the Agency of Agriculture, has sent samples from this year's lots of compost to a laboratory to test for suspect herbicides. Preliminary results are expected within a week.

The Agency of Agriculture and the Health Department advise Vermonters who see similar signs in their own plants to not sell or consume their garden produce, and to report damage to UVM Extension Service, Plant Diagnostic Clinic at 802-656-0493 or at <http://pss.uvm.edu/pd/pdc/>.

"The affected plants look odd and unhealthy," said the Health Department's State Toxicologist Sarah Vose, PhD. "We don't expect that low levels of herbicides would cause consumers any harm but, as a precaution and until we know more, it makes sense to not eat food grown in what we suspect to be contaminated compost."

Lab test results will be reported as soon as they are available.

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