

Suwannee Valley Watermelon Crop Update- May 12, 2019

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Alert: Bacterial leaf spot (*Xanthomonas*) confirmed

Reminder: Suwannee Valley Watermelon Grower Field Day

We plan to have the meeting rain or shine. We can use the conference room for presentations, if needed.

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/suwannee-valley-watermelon-grower-field-day-registration-61064098362>

Monday, May 13, 2019; 5:30- 8:00 pm

Check in 5:15 to 5:30 pm

Trolley Tour of 6 watermelon research trials (5:30-7:30 pm)

Dinner (7:30-8:00 pm)

Pesticide Applicator and Certified Crop Advisor CEUs available

Location NFREC-Suwannee Valley, 8202 CR 417, Live Oak FL 32060

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We are definitely getting closer to harvests and I know a few are planning to start this upcoming week. I saw fruit this week that I thought,....hmmm, I bet that one is ready enough to eat!!!! The watermelon crops the past week continued to progress very well. We have been on the lookout for foliar diseases, and we began to get some new activity this past week. A bit of a surprise, but we have 4 confirmations of bacterial leaf spot (*Xanthomonas* sp.). The symptoms are on leaves away from the rough looking crown leaves that have been there all along. The symptoms on leaves in the middle of the vine growth include dark spots surrounded by a lot of yellow tissue, and the areas affected tend to be along the midrib and other main veins (photo included). It is likely the rains last weekend intensified the bacterial activity. Where overhead irrigation has been used, it seems to have really sped up the symptoms. The overhead irrigation did not "cause" the infection but has provided prolonged periods of free moisture deep in the canopy that the bacteria need to multiply. Keep in mind, not every field in the region has this bacteria, so not every field needs to be treated. But, for those fields needing treatment, you will need to include copper in your spray program, typically added to mancozeb (Manzate or Penncozeb or other). Use "up to the medium" rate of copper product as stated on the label. It is difficult to give a blanket recommendation on rate because there are so many formulations of copper and different strengths. Also, we do **not** recommend adding copper to chlorothalonil.

We have not seen powdery mildew yet, perhaps because most fields have received at least one application of Quintec or Torino. Since powdery mildew pressure is low so far, you do not need Quintec or Torino every week (perhaps every other week). But, stay alert for powdery mildew by looking on the underside of the leaves for the spots of powdery tufts of spores. We will let you know if we begin seeing activity of powdery mildew.

The update on gummy stem blight is variable. We do have situations where gummy came in on transplants and those growers have been managing for gummy all along. Otherwise, pressure is very low

so far. Dr. Mathews Paret has reported to me there are isolated new infections he has seen in the Panhandle, so continue to be on the lookout. But, so far, it has been hard for me to justify the expensive treatments for gummy. If gummy becomes an issue, our specialists indicate the top targeted materials in research trials have been: Inspire Super, Aprovia Top, and Meravis Prime, but all are much more expensive than our standard programs.

We continue to receive questions the past week about strategies for controlling rindworms. I had one grower report they saw a few, but very few, melons with rindworm feeding. You can start a preventative spray program with one of the Bt (*Bacillus thuringiensis*) materials such as Dipel, Xentari, Javelin, Deliver, Agree, and others. The Bt materials are very safe to bees and are good at controlling very small, first instar caterpillars after the hatch and first feed on the leaves. If we get reports of rindworm feeding and higher pressure, then better spray choices may include Intrepid as a spray or Coragen as a spray. Do not use pyrethroids for control of rindworms as there is a very high level of resistance to that class and they are very toxic to bees.

We have also seen small pockets in field perimeters with high populations of squash bug immatures. In some cases, I saw dozens of immatures on the plastic under the crop canopy. The infestations were isolated to pockets in the perimeter of the fields and once you got 50-100 feet away from the edge of the field, it was hard to find any immature squash bugs. The soft-bodied gray/silver immatures look very different than the brown adults. They have piercing/sucking mouthparts and suck the sap from the plants. It appeared that under those very high populations, they were causing stress/burn on the leaf tissue as a result of their feeding. The challenge is whether you can treat only the field borders (at night) or other method and still protect the bees, because the pyrethroid category is the main class of chemicals effective on squash bug given plenty of spray volume and pressure. Try not to over-react if populations are very isolated. Be sure to read the label carefully regarding use in blooming crops and foraging bees.

Good Luck next week and call us if you need anything.