

Suwannee Valley Watermelon Crop Update- May 25, 2020
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This update is urgent:

TWO WORDS- DOWNY MILDEW

Hello watermelon growers and allied industry as well. This update is provided by collecting information from your UF/IFAS Extension agents in the Suwannee Valley, IFAS state Extension specialists and other industry field men. Thanks to all of you who contribute to help our growers.

Downy mildew is very active in the region, throughout the region now. Over the past few weeks, downy mildew was mainly in the southern portions of the region (Alachua, Levy and Gilchrist Counties). We urge you to stay on top of fungicide spays for downy, but now it is throughout the entire region. During the past couple days, I saw the worst case I have seen in 45 years, reminding me of what we used to see in the old days in Jubilee and Charleston Gray when there was no fungicide program to slow it down. That is when it had the name of “wildfire”. Apparently, it still deserves that nickname!!!! This spring, Orondis Ultra and Ranman in the rotation weekly seem to have been doing well at containing early detected areas in a field or as a preventative treatment. We suggest using one of these materials every 7 days until you approach the end of the harvest period. The risk continues to be too great not to be on a preventative program right now. Where we are seeing fields with very progressive damage, spray intervals were not started early enough or had spray intervals too long, more than 10-14 days apart. A 7-day interval has been and continues to be needed. Orondis Ultra and Raman both have a zero days preharvest interval which is very helpful during the harvest season. These recommended materials can be added to a broader spectrum material like mancozeb (Manzate or Penncozeb) in the tank mix if time before the next harvest allows, but mancozeb carries a 5 day preharvest interval. You may have to use Orondis Ultra or Ranman alone if preharvest intervals are less than 5 days. If you have badly infested fields with downy mildew, try to harvest that field last in the day. Have workers wash clothes at the end of every day. The weather forecast this week is not in our favor. Downy is all I am going to really comment on this week because that is how serious it is. Uncontrolled, downy mildew has the characteristics now to end the party early if not managed aggressively.

- Powdery mildew is still active as well.
- Don't forget rindworms.
- Yellow leaf syndrome- nothing new confirmed on it but we are making progress. We are looking hard at the potential long-term impact of the cold weather event in early April. Stay tuned.