Gummy Stem Blight Alert May 13

Welcome to our UF/IFAS Extension Suwannee Valley Weekly Watermelon Crop Update. These updates will be summarized by **Bob Hochmuth** with input from Suwannee Valley Extension Agents: **Mark Warren, Tyler Pittman, Tatiana Sanchez, Luke Harlow, Jay Capasso, Sylvia Wills, Dan Fenneman, Keith Wynn, Danielle Sprague, Kevin Athearn, and Charles Barrett**

This update is being sent as a mid-week ALERT for Gummy Stem Blight

Reports this week are frequent and are being confirmed quickly that we are undergoing high pressure and outbreaks of gummy stem blight (see three photos below). The high temperatures and higher humidity along with rain showers in the region all seem to be providing the perfect environment for gummy to really take hold. Affected fields can be found throughout the region. In fact, I would be willing to bet we could find gummy infections in every field if we looked hard enough.

Lesions can form on the stem that enlarge and girdle the main stem. Cracking is often visible on the stem, accompanied by gummy ooze. Cankers develop on the stem that can be red, brown, or black in color, and a red to amber gummy substance can exude from this region. Black fruiting bodies of the fungus (pycnidia, perithecia, or pseudothecia) are often visible on the infected leaves, stems, and fruits and serve in confirmatory diagnosis. Large, brown lesions from severe infections can form on areas of the leaves that retain moisture for long periods of time, such as around veins or leaf margins (from: https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/PP280).

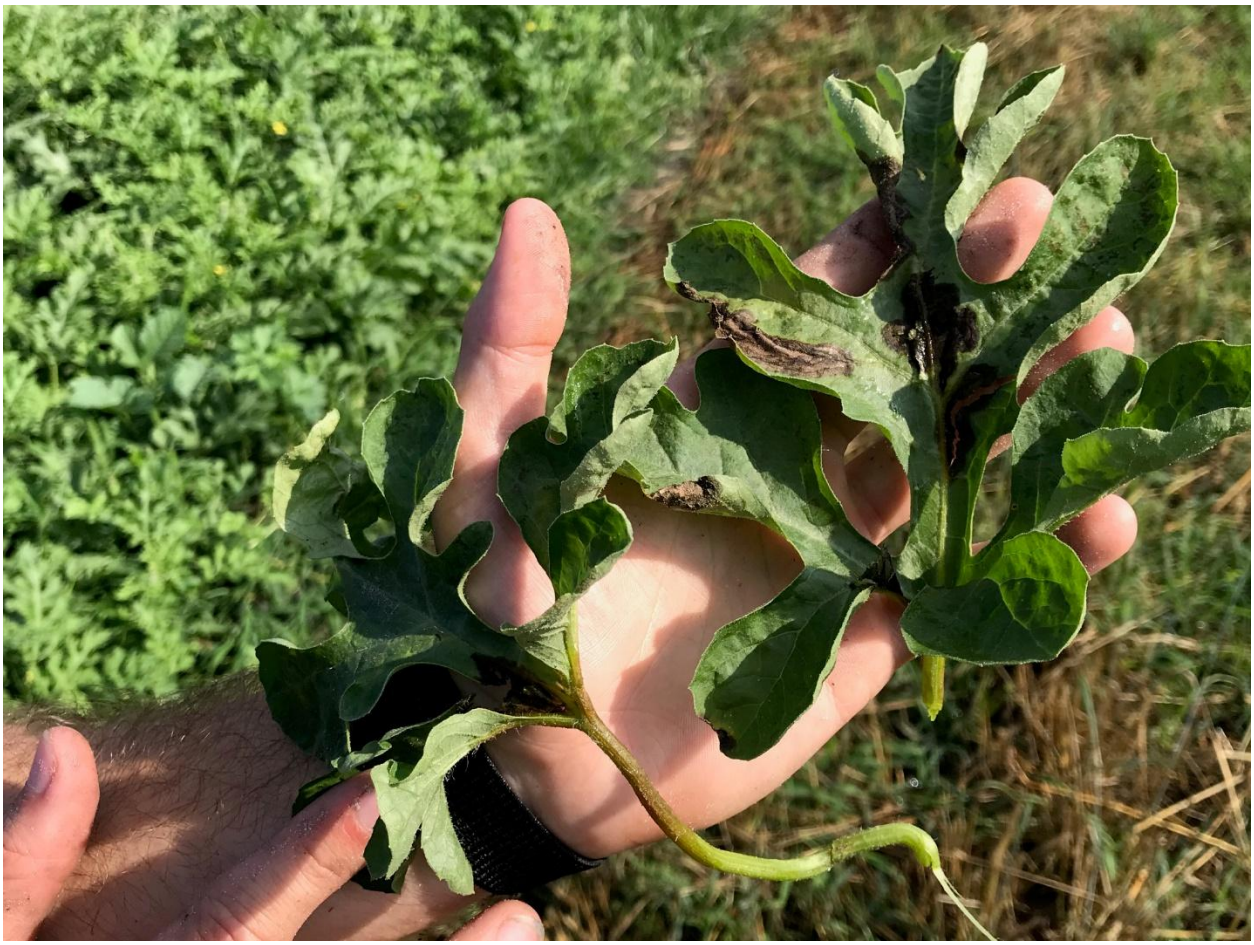
These symptoms are much very common now and the difference between severe and milder symptoms in fields is whether either Miravis Prime or Inspire Super had already been sprayed prior to the last week. Where either Miravis Priime or Inspire Super, or both, had been sprayed recently, the gummy stem blight symptoms are much less. If your fields have not received one or both of those

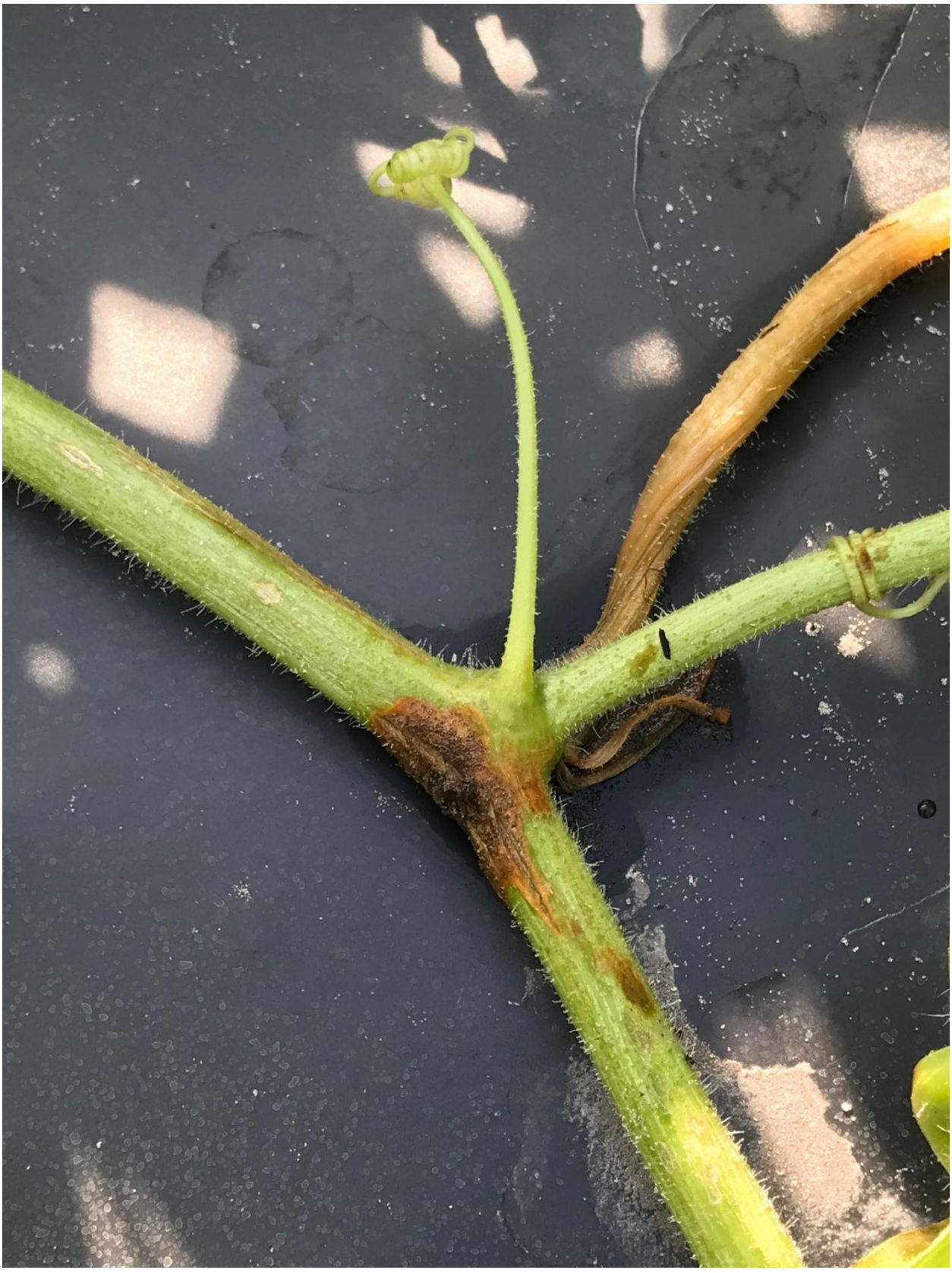
sprays, we URGE you to apply an application of Inspire Super immediately, as soon as weather permits. Inspire Super is the top-rated fungicide in our UF/IFAS research trials.

If you apply Inspire Super, you can tank mix with certain other materials, but be careful. You can add Procure if you want extra protection against powdery mildew. We still have not confirmed any cases of powdery mildew in the Suwannee Valley area, but we suggest everyone keep scouting for it. Inspire Super will give some help on powdery mildew but is mainly targeted at gummy stem blight. You can also tank mix insecticides Intrepid or Coragen with Inspire Super.

Do not add any surfactant, foliar fertilizers, or any other pesticide (especially those with an emulsifiable concentrate (EC)) to the tank mix with Inspire Super. Higher volumes of spray per acre and higher pressure will improve coverage and effectiveness of controlling gummy since the major symptoms are down low in the plant canopy. As with all sprays really, it is preferred to not spray in the hottest part of the day (Summary provided by Bob Hochmuth).

Gummy stem blight (leaves, stems and petioles) photos by Bob Hochmuth





Thank You to the Suwannee Valley Rapid Diagnostic Watermelon Program and Its Industry Sponsors: UF/IFAS Extension agents have initiated a more formal way to support our watermelon growers with a rapid diagnostics system through Suwannee Valley Regional. This industry-funded program allows Extension Agents to submit and pay for watermelon grower plant disease and other diagnostic samples. This SV Rapid Diagnostic Watermelon Program will help us to get quicker diagnostic results and not have to charge the growers directly. Plant disease samples are typically $40 and leaf tissue analyses are typically $20. We want to thank the initial sponsors of this program: **Syngenta Crop Protection, Harrell's Fertilizer, Koppert Biological Systems, SEEDWAY LLC, BASF Vegetable Seeds, Bayer Crop Science, Gowan Seed, and Gowan USA** for sponsoring this effort. Other industry reps interested in sponsoring this effort can contact Bob Hochmuth at bobhoch@ufl.edu or 386-288-6301.