

Welcome to this week's 2022 season's weekly issue of our UF/IFAS Extension Suwannee Valley Watermelon Crop Update. These updates are summarized by Bob Hochmuth with input from Suwannee Valley Extension Agents: Mark Warren (Levy), Tyler Pittman (Gilchrist), Tatiana Sanchez (Alachua), Luke Harlow (Union), Jay Capasso (Columbia), Dan Fenneman (Madison), Keith Wynn (Hamilton), Danielle Sprague (Jefferson), Emily Beach (Lafayette), Amanda Phillips (Suwannee), Kevin Athearn (RSA-Agri- business), and Sudeep Sidhu (RSA- Water Resources).

If you know someone who wants to be added to this weekly notice, contact your Extension Agent or Mark Warren (352-949-8288) if you want to be added to the regional watermelon group text app.

Thank You to the 2022 Suwannee Valley Rapid Diagnostic Watermelon Program and Its Industry Sponsors. Syngenta Crop Protection, Glades Crop Care, TriEst Ag Group, Gowan USA, Summit Agro-USA, and Harrell's Fertilizer for sponsoring this effort. Other industry reps interested in sponsoring this effort can contact Bob Hochmuth at bobhoch@ufl.edu or 386-288-6301.

Disease Update

The weather has been our greatest ally against disease over the past few weeks. We continue to report very good news in that we have simply not seen much disease activity of any concern, other than the increasing concerns over Fusarium wilt this spring. However, the multiple violent storms over the weekend could certainly change things in those fields where the storms hit. We have confirmed isolated cases of hail in other crops in the northern part of the Suwannee Valley as well. The increasing incidence of Fusarium in fields where the risk should be low is very alarming. The decrease in availability of land for suitable rotation makes this challenge even greater. Regarding spray programs once harvests start, pay close attention to pre-harvest intervals (PHI). Common rotations after harvests begin will include the following materials: Mancozeb (Manzate, Penncozeb) which has a PHI of 5 days, Quintec 3 day PHI, and Procure 0 day PHI. But, other materials like tebuconazole, Inspire Super, and Luna Experience all have a 7 day PHI, so be alert to the PHI and your harvesting schedule and food safety records.

The other great news is that we still do not have any confirmed cases of downy mildew in the Suwannee Valley, so hopefully we can totally avoid/minimize the expensive sprays for downy. But, we are on alert and will let you know if we get any confirmed cases of downy. Until then, save your money on those sprays. **(Bob Hochmuth)**

Nutrient Management Update:

Most conventionally fertilized fields are at the stage of growth where the fertigation rates likely should be 2.0- 2.5 lbs per acre per day rate for nitrogen and potassium, using the net acres of watermelons in the field (not including drive middles and other non-cropped areas in the field). Once we start harvests, it is common to set the rate at 2.0 lbs per acre per day and leave it there until one week from last pick. It is not useful to fertigate that last week of harvest. Once we get to first harvest, we typically stop using petiole-sap testing and set things at the 2.0 lbs/A/day rate. If you have situations where you think sap testing may be helpful, let us know. Otherwise, we will not be continuing that service as you approach or are into harvesting. **(Bob Hochmuth)**

Maintain Preventative Rindworm Sprays

A very economical program is to add a Bt (*Bacillus thuringiensis*) spray now and continue this weekly until pressure gets high. Bt is effective in killing young worms shortly after they hatch from feeding on the leaves. But, Bt is not a good choice for larger worms discovered later in their life cycle. Once pressure is high, you should switch to Coragen or Intrepid. This is the general program we have used very successfully here at the Center in Live Oak for several years. **(Bob Hochmuth)**

Join the Florida Watermelon Association: It is the mission of the Florida Watermelon Association to support research, education, and promotion of the fresh Florida watermelon industry. If you are not a current member, I encourage you to join. Your voice as a watermelon farmer needs to be heard on so many issues, now more than ever. All watermelon farmers and allied industry representatives should join. I am a member, and I encourage every reader of this weekly update to join as well. The 54th Annual FWA Convention will be November 1-3, 2022, in St. Petersburg, Florida. To join FWA or find out how to register for the 2022 Convention, go to <https://www.flfwa.com/> **(Bob Hochmuth)**.

Fun Bonus photo below. What is the cause of the problem shown in this photo below? Note: this photo taken last week by Mark Warren somewhere in the Suwannee Valley.

For the answer, see pages 66 and 67 in your handy IFAS Watermelon Production Guide.

