

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.

Observations from last week (Bob Hochmuth)

Short and sweet,...we have not seen any new diseases this past week, however, we are seeing increased incidence of gummy stem blight. We are still on the lookout for Downy Mildew, but we do not have any confirmed cases of Downy in the Suwannee Valley area. We are also looking out for rindworm populations and feeding damage, but reports have been very light so far. We are hoping Fusarium damage will slow down as well.

Strategies for Gummy Stem Blight (Bob Hochmuth)

If you see gummy stem blight in your field, you may consider strategies for management as you approach harvest. Research trials for gummy stem blight show Inspire Super is an excellent material for control and that Luna Experience is also a good choice. Both of these materials have a 7 day "Pre-harvest Interval" (PHI). So, as we get 7-10 days from first harvest, you may want to use one of these materials since it becomes difficult to adhere to a 7-day pre-harvest interval after harvests are started. Since the weather pattern is still in favor of powdery mildew, we would suggest adding a material to Inspire Super or Luna Experience.

Stay on Powdery Mildew Spray Program (Bob Hochmuth and Mathews Paret)

Stay on your powdery mildew preventative fungicide programs. We recommend you rotate between Quintec and Procure rotated and one or the other sprayed weekly along with your broad-spectrum fungicides (Mancozeb or Chlorothalonil) if gummy stem blight is not present in your fields.

Initiate Preventative Rindworm Sprays (Bob Hochmuth)

Here are a few suggestions. 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 can 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.

Petiole Sap Testing for Seeded vs Seedless Cultivars (Bob Hochmuth and Mark Warren)

Some fields are still at fertigation rates of 2.0 lbs per acre per day of nitrogen and potash, but many are now at the maximum rate this week of 2.5 lbs per acre per day of nitrogen and potassium and will continue at that level until first harvest. Under a good irrigation program, we should not need to go beyond this 2.5 lbs rate. This is only informational and not intended as an across-the-board recommendation for everyone. Use the guidance given by Extension Agents in YOUR fields.