

Welcome to our UF/IFAS Extension Suwannee Valley Watermelon Crop Update. These updates will be summarized by Bob Hochmuth, Regional Specialized Extension Agent- Vegetable Crops, with input from Suwannee Valley Extension Agents: Mark Warren (Levy), Tyler Pittman (Gilchrist), Tatiana Sanchez-Jones (Alachua), Luke Harlow (Bradford), Dan Fenneman (Madison), Keith Wynn (Hamilton), Emily Beach (Lafayette), Jim Devalerio (Union), Ben Hoffner (Jefferson), Raymond Balaguer (Suwannee), Derick Conover (Columbia) Kevin Athearn (RSA-Agri- business), Shivendra Kumar (RSA-Agronomic Crops), and Jay Capasso (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.

We will continue this year to support our watermelon growers with a rapid diagnostics system through Suwannee Valley Regional and County Extension Agents. This industry-funded program allows Extension Agents to submit and pay for watermelon grower's plant disease and other diagnostic samples. This **SV Rapid Diagnostic Watermelon Program** will help us to get quicker diagnostic results, helping to give early alerts to everyone, and not have to charge the growers directly. Plant disease samples are typically \$40 and leaf tissue analyses are typically \$20. **We are currently soliciting those industry reps interested in sponsoring this effort. The past year's sponsorships have ranged from \$200 to \$2,000 per company. Sponsors will be recognized every week beginning this week. Those interested in being added as a sponsor can contact Bob Hochmuth at bobhoch@ufl.edu or 386-288-6301.**

Current 2025 sponsors of our Watermelon Rapid Diagnostics Program include: Mayo Ag Services, Gowan USA, Smurfit/WestRock Paper Mulch, Orbia Netafim, Syngenta Crop Protection, Harrell's Fertilizer, TriEst Ag, and Triangle Chemical Company. Other sponsors are still welcome to join.

Weekly Update:

Pretty short report this week as very little has changed. Happy Easter to everyone!

We sent a mid-week notice of confirmation of downy mildew in the very southern part of our Suwannee Valley region. But this confirmation is different than our normal infections that come in from South Florida on weather patterns. It appears that lone infected field was likely infected from movement into the area on transplants or workers. We are on high alert for other infections, but none are reported yet. We continue to see very few, if any, foliar diseases so far this season. With dry conditions predicted this upcoming week, the risk of new infections of bacterial or fungal diseases is low. Therefore, we may still be on a chlorothalonil or mancozeb cover spray this week. Seems pretty boring, we know, but it really is great news. We know our disease time, as always, will come later this season. If you choose to add tebuconazole to that cover spray, it may be useful. Also, if you like to switch to Miravis Prime, as it is best positioned ahead of disease infections, this week or next week would be the proper timing. But one more week of chlorothalonil is as good as any choice based on our current situation. With this dry warm weather, we need to be on the lookout for powdery mildew next.

Squash bugs have been frequently reported this past week. See past notices for the details, but the pyrethroid class of insecticides is our best choice. Spray at night or otherwise protect your bees. Use high volume and high pressure to assure coverage in the hole in the plastic and at the base of the plant.



2. Union County Watermelon Field Day Co-planned by BASF and UF/IFAS Extension at Dukes Family Farm, near Lake Butler. This will be a morning field day starting at 9 am on Wednesday, **June 11, 2025**.

[Watermelon Variety Trial Tickets, Wed, Jun 11, 2025 at 8:30 AM | Eventbrite](#)



The banner features a photograph of two whole watermelons and a wedge of watermelon on a green field background. Logos for BASF, Nunhems, and UF/IFAS are displayed. The event title 'WATERMELON VARIETY TRIAL' is prominently shown in large white letters on a green background. Below the title, the event is identified as the 'BASF/NUNHEMS NORTH FLORIDA WATERMELON VARIETY SHOWCASE'. Key details include the date 'JUNE 11, 2025' and time '08:30 AM - 01:00 PM'. The 'Event Highlights' section lists 'Educational Opportunities', 'Watermelon Tasting', 'Sponsored Meal', and 'CEU Credits Available'. A 'REGISTER HERE!' button and a QR code are provided for registration. Contact information and the event website are listed at the bottom.

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BASF
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nunhems

WATERMELON VARIETY TRIAL

BASF/NUNHEMS NORTH FLORIDA WATERMELON VARIETY SHOWCASE

 **JUNE 11, 2025**
08:30 AM - 01:00 PM

About Our Event!

Dukes Family Farms, BASF| Nunhems and the UF/IFAS are pleased to invite watermelon producers and enthusiasts to a day of learning fun!

LOCATION:
7669 Brown and Roberts Road
Lake Butler, FL 32054

Event Highlights

Educational Opportunities ◀

Attendees will view 16 varieties in the field & learn about the latest water and fertilizer application tools. Also, disease, insect and weed suppression.

Watermelon Tasting ◀

Taste some delicious watermelon with a special appearance from our Watermelon Queen!

Sponsored Meal ◀

Enjoy a fine lunch provided by Dukes Family Farm. A multi generation family farm

CEU Credits Available ◀

Ag Row
Private Applicator

REGISTER HERE!



 **Contact us**
386-496-2321

 **Website**
<https://sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/union/>



2025 Suwannee Valley CARES:


The Farm Bureau's signature environmental stewardship recognition program, Suwannee Valley CARES, is set for Thursday, May 1, 2025, at NFREC-Suwannee Valley. The Florida Watermelon Association will be there along with the 2025 Florida Watermelon Queen, Reagan Hudson. Come get some fresh Florida watermelon and all types of other ag commodities for dinner that evening. (Bob Hochmuth, Kelly Aue)

**UF/IFAS NFREC
SUWANNEE VALLEY**
8202 County Road 417
Live Oak, FL 32060

- **SAMPLE FLORIDA PRODUCTS**
- **LIVE ENTERTAINMENT**
- **DOOR PRIZES**

The 24th Annual Suwannee CARES Celebration will honor local farm families who protect our environment throughout the Suwannee and Santa Fe River Basins. Join us on Thursday, May 1 beginning at 6:00 PM!

YOU'RE INVITED!



RSVP your party using the QR code or at [Eventbrite.com](https://www.Eventbrite.com) under 2025 CARES Dinner



www.ThisFarmCARES.org