

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 always 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.

Thinking through things and prioritizing expenses:

Given the market demand and prices are both challenging, I thought we could simply go through things a bit and try to help everyone decide where certain expenditures are necessary and where certain expenditures may be less important. First, we have some fields in the region that have been picked three times and others not at all or only once over. So, it means decisions vary greatly from field to field. But here are a few things to think about.

1. Irrigation is a must and is not an area where we can cut back until you are in the very final days of harvesting. Use the soil moisture sensors to efficiently manage your irrigation events and save what you can by avoiding overirrigating.
2. If you are considering running a pivot over the field, I would give you great caution, not to do that unless an absolute necessity or something is wrong with the drip system. The risk is that you will undoubtedly increase the likelihood of downy mildew. We have already seen this happen this year and it has frequently happened in past years. The overhead irrigation events provide the moisture needed for downy mildew to rapidly spread.
3. As far as disease incidence is concerned, the feedback from agents in the region and consultant De Broughton (thanks De) are all the same. That is, downy is the main threat right now and in

some fields, control has been a struggle while other fields still look clean. So we suggest maintaining a spray program targeted at downy mildew. The best material is Orondis Ultra but it is also very expensive. If you have an outbreak of downy mildew, Orondis Ultra may be necessary. But if you do not see downy mildew in fields, then less expensive options include Ranman or generic versions. Research at the University of Georgia has shown moderate control of downy mildew with Elumin, Previcur Flex or Presidio, (similar to control with Ranman) so these may be in consideration as less expensive options in a rotation other than Orondis Ultra.

4. Powdery mildew and gummy stem blight have generally been much less of a problem so far this season, so we may be able to consider reducing the importance materials in the mix for those diseases. This could change, of course, so be cautious, but it may be an area to reduce some costs one week at a time.
5. Fertilizer rates may be another area to make sure we are using no more than needed. Once harvests begin, you should be able to reduce nitrogen and potash rates to 1.5-2.0 lbs per acre per day. If you are one week away from your final harvests, you should consider stopping fertigation events entirely that last week.
6. Rindworm management is a hard one to call, but I have not heard or seen much concern about rindworms, so, this may also be an area to consider if you can reduce some cost here as you move through the later harvests. I am not sure if you should eliminate sprays yet in fields where harvests have just begun.
7. One final consideration is regarding spraying some type of shade or sunburn prevention material. With the weather forecast this week looking cooler and more chance of rain and clouds, shade sprays may not be as critical over the next few days. In all honesty, what I saw this past week was that where the sprays used, there was hardly ever enough coverage to actually provide protection from sunburn.

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](#)



UF IFAS
UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA

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

REGISTER HERE!



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



Contact us
386-496-2321



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

