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THE BLUEBERRY BULLETIN

A Weekly Update to Growers

Visit the Blueberry Bulletin webpage: extension.rutgers.edu/blueberry-bulletin
2024 Commercial Blueberry Pest Control Recommendations for New Jersey: njaes.rutgers.edu/pubs

Blueberry Culture

Dr. Gary C. Pavlis, Atlantic County Agricultural Agent

The blueberry harvest season is over, and I think it is a good time to focus on things that should be done now. As most growers are aware, the Rutgers research team has been conducting a soil health project for the past 3 years. There are many details that were investigated, and we have discussed this project in detail at grower meetings. But the overwhelming factors affecting soil health were pH and soil organic matter. Both of these can be addressed at this time.

It is well known that the optimum pH for highbush blueberries is 4.5 to 4.8. The continual use of ammonium fertilizers drives the pH down over time. A survey of the fields in our IPM program revealed that 70% of the fields had a pH below 4.5 and 32% were below 4.0. If your soils are low, now is the time to apply lime. If you do not know the pH of your field, my office can do a quick pH test. Another thought with regard to pH, I have been told that many people are having trouble with the establishment of the variety Draper. This variety is the exception with regard to pH. It requires a higher pH, around 5.5 because of its high requirement for calcium which is more available at higher pHs. If you have a pH of 3.5, establishment of Draper is going to be very difficult.

Organic matter is the other critical factor for soil health. The soils of the Pinelands are high in organic matter. Our accepted method of growing blueberries has exhausted the natural organic matter in the soil. We use herbicides under the plants, and we rototill the middles. Both of these practices deplete the natural levels of soil OM. High levels of OM, 5-9% provide food for the soil microbial population required for soil health. We must continue to control the weed populations under the plants, but the practice of rototilling middles must stop. In addition, organic matter can be applied now in the form of mulch.

One last thought. Many fields that our research team evaluated had very poor drainage. Drainage ditches need to be routinely maintained to eliminate wet fields. The blueberry plant roots start to die in 27 hours in standing water. The NRCS agency can help growers with drainage problems. But replanting in a wet field is a waste of money.

Gary C. Pavlis, Ph.D.
Atlantic County Agricultural Agent

PEST MANAGEMENT

Dr. Cesar Rodriguez-Saona, Extension Specialist in Blueberry Entomology, Rutgers University
Dr. Janine Spies, IPM Agent – Fruit
Ms. Carrie Mansue, IPM Sr. Program Coordinator – Fruit

IPM scouting was conducted last week in both Burlington and Atlantic Counties, focusing solely on trap counts.

Spotted-Wing Drosophila (SWD) and Oriental Beetle (OB). No treatments are currently recommended for spotted-wing drosophila (SWD) or oriental beetle (OB).

Week Ending	SWD AC Traps		SWD BC Traps		OB AC Traps		OB BC Traps	
	AVG	HIGH	AVG	HIGH	AVG	HIGH	AVG	HIGH
6/6/25	8.5	29	3	9	7.8	29	0	0
6/13/25	21.51	45	32.6	86	240	1350	34	170
6/20/25	37.52	148	37.6	83	405	2025	555.4	4050
6/27/25	13.5	34	27.4	67	681	2025	134.9	450
7/4/25	21.2	73	41.1	64	541	2025	331.6	1575
7/11/25	46	155	48	103	322	1650	256	1238
7/18/25	42.42	127	39.8	87	133	675	174	900
7/26/25	51.76	238	34.9	100	164.8	675	64.4	200
8/2/25	66.5	233	43	78	83	675	15	28
8/8/25	49	265	70	328	14	100	9.4	24
SWD = Spotted-Wing Drosophila, OB = Oriental Beetle; AC = Atlantic County, BC = Burlington County								

Blueberry Maggot (BBM) and Sharp-nosed Leafhopper (SNLH). If needed, the next target spray will be for sharp-nosed leafhopper (SNLH); however, current trap counts remain low.

Week Ending	BBM AC Traps		BBM BC Traps		SNLH AC Traps		SNLH BC Traps	
	AVG	HIGH	AVG	HIGH	AVG	HIGH	AVG	HIGH
6/6/25	0	0	0	0	1	6	0.85	3
6/13/25	0.29	7	0.16	4	1.26	8	3.27	17
6/20/25	0	0	0.04	1	1.28	8	4	16
6/27/25	0.05	4	0	0	0.25	1	0.28	2
7/4/25	0	0	0	0	0.81	13	1.17	4
7/11/25	0	0	0	0	0.35	2	0.68	5
7/18/25	0	0	0	0	0.56	8	0.38	2
7/26/25	0	0	0.04	1	0.3	4	0	0
8/2/25	0.001	1	0	0	0.41	7	0	0
8/8/25	0	0	0	0	0.25	4	0.07	1
BBM = Blueberry Maggot, SNLH = Sharp-nosed Leafhopper; AC = Atlantic County, BC = Burlington County								

Organic Practice Sprays. No insecticide spray is recommended at this time; the next target will be sharp-nosed leafhopper.

Update on Malathion 8 Flowable

A Special Local Need (SLN) label has been granted for Malathion 8 Flowable Insecticide (Gowan Company) for the control of SWD on blueberries in New Jersey. This SLN label expires December 31, 2027. Under this SLN, Malathion 8 Flowable may be applied at up to 2.5 pt/acre, with a maximum of two applications per year and a minimum retreatment interval of seven days. Do not exceed a total maximum use rate of malathion from all sources of 5 lbs ai/acre/year. Do not apply within one day of harvest or within 25 feet of aquatic habitats (including, but not limited to, lakes, reservoirs, rivers, streams, marshes, natural ponds, estuaries, and commercial fish ponds). Always read and follow the label instructions before application.