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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

Save the Date: Blueberry Twilight Meeting, Thursday, May 14th, Research Center 6pm

Blueberry Culture

Dr. Gary C. Pavlis, Atlantic County Agricultural Agent

Fertigation Guidelines:

Growers have asked me for some guidelines for fertigating blueberries. As you may be aware, our research in New Jersey has shown that fertilizing blueberries a little at a time through the trickle system has proved to be very beneficial. Increases in yield have been seen each year of the research. In addition, increases in fruit firmness have often been seen.

Over the years the following guidelines have been developed:

1. Determine the amount of Nitrogen required/acre/year for each field. Total N should be based on leaf analysis the year before, however 60# of Nitrogen/A is a good base recommendation for mature plants if a leaf analysis has not been conducted.
2. Multiply total acres to be fertigated by #/A and converted to total gallons for the season.
3. Fertigation period is 6-8 weeks, starting at ¾ bloom. Fertigate once a week for 1-2 hours during the normal irrigation schedule. Run irrigation a minimum of ½ hour before and ½ hour after fertigation. If travel time from the injection point to the final application point is longer, allow for one hour before and after fertigation time of travel. This will ensure application uniformity to the furthest emitter within the zone. As a rule of thumb, for a scheduled irrigation, irrigate at least 3-4 hour during a 1–2-hour fertigation. Using a 1gph emitter, irrigate 4-6 hours every 3 days, with a .5 gph emitter, irrigate 8-12 hours every 3

days. This is based on no rainfall and ET rates of .2".26"/day.

4. Install tensiometers to monitor soil moisture within the 12"-18" root zone depth. For loamy sands and sandy loams irrigate when readings are 20-30 CB on the tensiometers. This will supply needed water and fertilizer to the root zones.
5. Injection pump should be sized for maximum acreage/zone that you plan to irrigate/fertigate at one time (2-hour injection time, for a 4-hour irrigation per zone). Example- a 10-acre drip system at 60# N requirement/acre will need 600 gallons of liquid 10-10-10. If injection is scheduled for once a week for 8 weeks, 75 gph injection pump is recommended for a one-hour injection period. If you inject for 2 hours, the rate is lower (37.5 gph injection rate). If zones are over 10 acres, plan for between 50-100 gph injection rate. A lower injection rate can be used with a longer fertigation/irrigation period.

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

Insects

Scouting activities were conducted last week across 141 fields in Burlington and Atlantic Counties. Field evaluations focused on the presence of leafrollers, spongy moth, plum curculio, and thrips. All target pests were detected during scouting (see Table 1). There was a slight increase in thrips activity; however, due to the ongoing pollination period, insecticide applications are not recommended at this stage (see previous newsletter for details). Moving forward, scouts will focus on monitoring fruit.

Table 1. Field Data

	Leafrollers		Spongy Moth		Plum Curculio		Thrips	
	Avg	High	Avg	High	Avg	High	Avg	High
4/17	0.0649	2	0.0001	0.1	0.0686	2.5	0.5547	9
4/25	0.0801	0.8	0.0001	0.1	0.1156	3	1.0383	26
5/1	0.1	0.8	0.0007	0.1	0.15	3	2.38	39

Trap Monitoring

Scale traps targeting Putnam and terrapin scale will be deployed this coming week to monitor first-generation crawler emergence and help optimize treatment timing.

Cranberry and cherry fruitworm traps were checked last week. No activity was detected for cranberry fruitworm; however, cherry fruitworm flight is active and moths were caught in traps (see Table 2). Monitoring will continue over the coming weeks. No treatments are recommended at this time.

Table 2. Trap Data

	Cranberry fruitworm (AC)		Cherry fruitworm (AC)		Cranberry fruitworm (BC)		Cherry fruitworm (BC)	
	Avg	High	Avg	High	Avg	High	Avg	High
4/28	0	0	2.5	5	0	0	3.5	7
AC: Atlantic County, BC: Burlington County								

Cranberry Fruitworm

Life Cycle: The cranberry fruitworm has one generation per year. It overwinters as a fully-grown larva within a cocoon made of silk and soil particles, known as a hibernaculum. Pupation occurs in early spring, and moths begin to emerge during the second to third weeks of May. Male moths emerge 3-4 days earlier than females. The adult moths are brownish-gray with a pair of white markings on each forewing (see Picture 1). The eggs are pale green, flat, and are laid singly along the inside rim of the calyx cup. Eggs hatch in 5-7 days, and the newly emerged larvae are pale yellowish-green. Upon hatching, larvae bore into the fruit, usually near the junction of the stem and berry. The larvae remain inside the fruit until it is consumed, then move to another fruit. A single larva may feed on 5-8 berries. Cranberry fruitworm infestations can be identified by the presence of webbing filled with excrement inside the berries (see Picture 2). Infested fruit may prematurely drop.

Picture 1. Adult cranberry fruitworm (Photo by Z. Szendrei)

Picture 2. Cranberry fruitworm damage to developing fruit (Photo by Z. Szendrei)

Scouting and Control: The timing of treatment can be determined using data from pheromone traps. The number of males caught in these traps helps assess the presence and distribution of cranberry fruitworm within a field. Traps are typically placed along wooded borders, where pest pressure tends to be highest. Growers with a history of high fruitworm populations should pay close attention to monitoring. Additionally, eggs can be scouted for after early fruit set. While larval infestations are difficult to detect early in the season, the growing number of affected fruits and the presence of frass provide clear signs of infestation as larvae develop.

Cranberry fruitworm can be controlled using registered insecticides. Depending on the population level, one or two applications may be necessary. If trap counts are high, an early application of an insect growth regulator (such as Intrepid, Confirm, or Esteem) can be made when the first eggs start to hatch, typically just before the peak flight in New Jersey. This would be followed by a second application shortly after bloom. Post-bloom applications can include broad-spectrum insecticides (such as Danitol, Asana, Mustang Maxx, or Imidan) or newer, softer options like Assail, Altacor, Avaunt, or Delegate, applied 7-10 days after the first treatment and after bees are removed. If trap counts suggest a lower population, a single post-bloom insecticide application may be sufficient. Since broad-spectrum insecticides can harm beneficial insects, they should only be applied once honeybee hives have been removed.

Weed Monitoring

In the coming weeks, the IPM team will monitor emerging weed populations within fields. This information will be used to guide post-emergence herbicide decisions and support effective management strategies aimed at reducing overall weed pressure.