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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

Stunt or Iron Deficiency? In Rouging out bushes with stunt disease, some growers have been confused by the stunt-like symptoms expressed by some plants. Blueberries affected by iron deficiency develop a yellowing of leaves (iron chlorosis) which does resemble leaf discoloration on stunted bushes. The main difference is that in stunt disease the leaves are cupped and yellowing occurs between the main veins. In iron deficiency, the leaves are not cupped; all of the little branchings stand out in a brilliant green and "netting" effect. Some leaves on bushes with iron chlorosis also have a pinkish-brown hue and the leaves at the base of the twig may be smaller than those toward the end. Many fields have small pockets of clay where the pH is higher than in the sand and the bushes may develop the stunt-like symptoms because iron is not available. Application of sprays containing iron is sometimes helpful but a permanent solution lies in lowering the pH by adding sulfur and/or organic matter to the soil. This is a special cultural problem and where more than just a few bushes are involved the grower should contact their county agent for advice on specific treatment.

No leaves: Growers visits this week have revealed fields with plants that have canes with fruit but no leaves. This is not Scorch. The lack of leaves usually points to a root problem. It could be

grubs, it could be root rot. In non-irrigated fields, the lack of leaves is due to root damage due to lack of water during the drought last summer. This fruit probably will not ripen and the plant may not survive.

Late summer/fall water applications are critical. In irrigated fields, I have seen many plants damaged by grubs. Admire is the control of choice in this case. Plants that have been damaged by grubs will pull out of the ground readily.

Lastly, toxic levels of Boron can also result in no leaves. Do not apply Boron unless leaf analysis indicates a deficiency.

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 165 commercial and organic blueberry fields in Burlington and Atlantic Counties. Field evaluations focused on monitoring pest activity and crop development, including assessments of leafrollers, spongy moth, plum curculio, and thrips using beating tray samples; fruit inspections for pest injury and developmental progress; and aphid infestations on new terminal growth. All target pests were detected during scouting activities (Table 1).

In addition, monitoring of developing fruit indicated a slight decrease in feeding and/or oviposition activity associated with these pests, most likely due to recent insecticide applications (Table 2).

Table 1. Beating Tray Sampling 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
5/9	0.08	0.7	0	0	0.245	4.5	1.89	37
5/16	0.04	0.7	0.0007	0.1	0.117	3.5	5.02	99
5/23	0.006	0.3	0.0006	0.1	0.016	0.5	3.43	142

Table 2. Fruit Sampling Data

	% Injury of Fruit by Leafroller		% Injury of Fruit by Plum Curculio	
	Avg	High	Avg	High
5/9	0.125	1	0.235	2.6
5/16	0.22	1.5	0.67	6.5
5/23	0.04	0.9	0.125	5.8

Plum Curculio

On average, scouts found 0.125 fruit with plum curculio scars per 10 bushes, with some fields reaching as high as 5.8 injured fruit per 10 bushes.

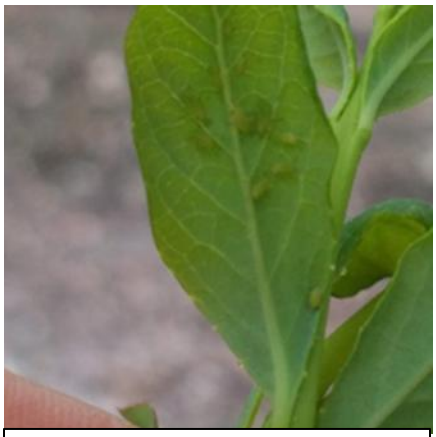
Aphids

Aphid activity has also begun in some scouted fields; however, colony sizes remain small, averaging 1–5 aphids per shoot (Table 3).

Table 3: Aphid Infestation on New Terminals

	Aphids % Terminal Infestation	
	Avg	High
5/23	1.5	14
Aphid Colony Size: A: 1-5, B: 6-10, C: 11-15, D: <16		

Biology and Life Cycle. Aphids are soft-bodied, slow-moving insects. Adults are typically about 2 mm long and range in color from light to dark green. They possess piercing-sucking mouthparts and two siphunculi (cornicles) that extend rearward from the sixth abdominal segment. Nymphs resemble adults but are smaller and wingless. Four main aphid species attack highbush blueberries: blueberry aphid (*Illinoia pepperi*), present in Michigan; azalea aphid (*Illinoia azaleae*), present in New Jersey; western blueberry aphid (*Ericaphis fimbriata*); and green peach aphid (*Myzus persicae*).



Young aphid colony on leaf. Photo by Carrie Mansue.

Aphids overwinter as eggs laid on stems and small shoots. These eggs hatch in the spring, and immature aphids begin feeding on tender new growth, usually on the undersides of leaves near the tops and bottoms of blueberry bushes. Males and egg-laying females are produced in the fall, and several generations may occur during the growing season.

Damage. Aphids feed by extracting sap from new shoots and developing terminal foliage. Under high population levels, honeydew excretions can promote the growth of sooty mold. However, this is generally of minor concern in blueberries because aphid populations rarely reach damaging levels. More importantly, aphids are known vectors of plant diseases. In blueberries, they can transmit

Blueberry Scorch Virus and its associated strains, posing a significant risk to crop health and productivity.

Monitoring and Control. Because disease transmission is the primary concern in commercial blueberry production, particularly in fields where Blueberry Scorch Virus (BlScV) is present, only very low aphid populations can be tolerated. Although aphids may be present during bloom, populations typically begin to increase after bloom, which is the current period of concern. Monitoring should begin as soon as bees are removed and continue through at least the first harvest. Sampling should focus on new terminal growth, and infestation levels should be recorded as the percentage of terminals infested with aphid colonies.

In situations where disease transmission is a concern, a colony may be defined as the presence of as few as 1–2 aphids (nymphs or adults).

Treatment is recommended when more than 10% of terminal shoots are infested with live aphids. Neonicotinoid insecticides such as Assail, Actara, and imidacloprid products such as Admire Pro provide effective aphid control. To help manage insecticide resistance, rotate with products that have different modes of action, such as Sivanto, Movento, or Senstar.

Biological control agents—including lady beetles, lacewings, syrphid flies, and parasitic wasps—are commonly present in blueberry fields at this time of year and may help suppress aphid populations below damaging thresholds.

Trap Monitoring

Cranberry fruitworm and cherry fruitworm traps were checked last week. Activity was detected for cranberry fruitworm, while cherry fruitworm activity continues to increase, indicating that adults are still in flight and mating (Table 4).

Table 4. Fruitworm Trap Data

	Cranberry Fruitworm (AC)		Cherry Fruitworm (AC)		Cranberry Fruitworm (BC)		Cherry Fruitworm (BC)	
	Avg	High	Avg	High	Avg	High	Avg	High
5/1	0	0	2.5	5	0	0	3.5	7
5/9	0	0	4.4	6	0	0	6.25	10
5/16	0	0	7.7	11	0	0	9	15
5/23	0.14	1	5.14	15	0.25	1	16	29
AC: Atlantic County, BC: Burlington County								

Scale insect traps were checked, and crawlers are beginning to become active in both terrapin scale and Putnam scale traps (Table 5).

Table 5. Scale Insect Trap Data

	Putnam		Terrapin	
	Avg	High	Avg	High
5/23	36.85	230	1.8	8

Weeds

The IPM team continues to monitor weed populations. Recent activity includes the emergence of crabgrass and groundsel.

For management recommendations, refer to the Rutgers Commercial Blueberry Guide:

Rutgers Commercial Blueberry Guide

Diseases

During scouting activities this past week, low levels of Alternaria and Botrytis were observed on corolla tissue. Although disease incidence remained low, both pathogens were present in the field. Moving forward, fungicide programs should include products with activity against Anthracnose, Alternaria, and Botrytis.

Anthracnose remains the primary disease concern at this time; however, given the recent weather conditions, an increase in disease development on corolla tissue still attached to the fruit would not be unexpected.

For management recommendations, refer to the Rutgers Commercial Blueberry Guide:

Rutgers Commercial Blueberry Guide

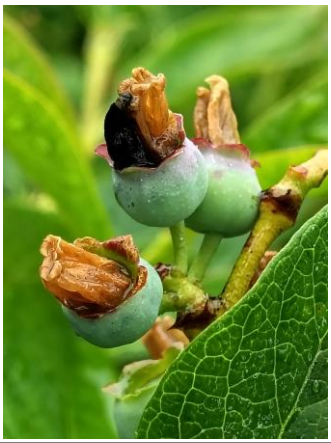


Photo by Karlt Neidigh.

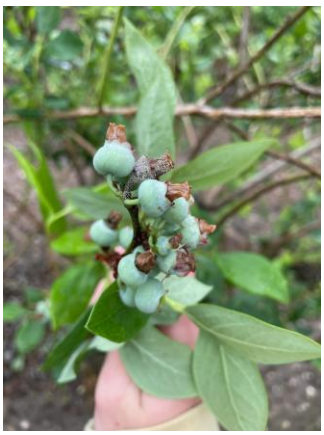


Photo by Tina Maguire.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 20, 2026
Press Office: Governor's Office

Governor Sherrill Declares a State of Emergency Following Sweeping Agricultural Losses

April Cold Snap Results in Millions in Losses, Prompting State of Emergency for New Jersey Farmers

TRENTON – Governor Sherrill declared New Jersey in a State of Emergency, effective immediately, following the conclusion of loss assessments conducted to evaluate agricultural damages from prolonged freezing temperatures that impacted the State between April 19 and April 22. The assessments, compiled by the New Jersey Department of Agriculture in coordination with the Farm Service Agency County Committees, indicate farm crop damage exceeding thirty percent in many areas of the State, with some growers anticipating 100% losses for certain crops. Early estimates suggest at least $300 million in total crop losses for growers and farmers.

The losses stem from a cold snap following a heat wave that struck crops precisely at a critical developmental stage, resulting in severe injury to blossoms and newly forming fruit. The State of Emergency enacts sweeping interagency coordination focused on alleviating further financial losses for those impacted, while underscoring the need for federal support the Governor has outlined.

With the signing of Executive Order No. 18, declaring a State of Emergency across all 21 counties, Governor Sherrill is taking action to preserve farm operations, stabilize local economies, and protect New Jersey's agricultural capacity for future seasons.

“New Jersey's agricultural sector is a vital engine of our economy; it is the very reason we bear the name the Garden State. The April freeze caused serious damage to our growers, and those losses demand decisive action,” **said Governor Mikie Sherrill**. “This executive order mobilizes a whole-of-government recovery effort out of Trenton, cutting through bureaucracy and accelerating results for impacted farmers and families. Our farming families are hurting, and I won’t stand by and let it happen.”

“Governor Sherrill’s declaration of a State of Emergency sends a clear message that New Jersey stands behind its farming community in the wake of the April freeze,” **said Ed Wengryn, New Jersey Secretary of Agriculture**. “This executive order cuts through bureaucracy and opens the door to immediate assistance for our tree fruit and berry growers, while laying the groundwork for broader relief ahead. As our farmers work to recover, we encourage New Jerseyans to continue supporting them by buying local. When the state and federal government move together, our farmers are stronger for it.”

The Executive Order declares a State of Emergency across New Jersey in response to the severe agricultural losses across many different crops. Recognizing the Statewide impact of this event and its evolving downstream impacts to our communities, this declaration ensures a coordinated statewide response, empowers the State to identify barriers to an effective response and recovery, and grants temporary regulatory flexibility to facilitate recovery efforts. The extent of the damages is preliminary and the impacts from this event are still evolving.