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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

June Symptoms: As blueberry harvest is almost upon us, I am getting numerous calls from growers who are noticing plants that are not looking normal. This is the typical time for various symptoms to show up because the plant is actively trying to ripen the fruit load that has set. This process takes a tremendous amount of nutrients and water from the plant. Actually, nutrients and water that are taken up from the soil go to the fruit first and if there is a surplus, it goes to nurture the plant. As a result, if there are any problems such as root rot, root damage due to grubs, nutrient deficiencies, or a lack of roots due to a hard pan that has restricted root growth, the plants will often not be able to push out leaves and in fact, the developing fruit may start to shrivel. Extreme heat will bring out these symptoms even faster because the plant is further stressed. Visits to farms in the last few days have revealed plants that are definitely stressed. For the most part, many do not have leaves. I have mentioned this symptom in this newsletter before. This symptom is almost always due to a root problem. In most cases it is due to grubs. Watch this newsletter for timing of grub control. To save a plant with no leaves three things must be done, 1. strip all the fruit off, 2. keep the plant well-watered as it has a low percentage of functioning roots, 3. control the grubs. The second most numerous symptom I am seeing is stem blight. One or more canes in a plant suddenly die with all the leaves turning brown but still hanging on to the plant.

Again, the plant is under the stress of ripening the fruit with increasing temperatures and the canes are infected with this disease. As a result, they shut down and die quite rapidly. Growers need to stay on top of pruning these canes out. If they don't, the disease moves down into the crown and kills the entire plant.

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
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Insects

Scouting was conducted last week across 177 commercial and organic blueberry fields in Burlington and Atlantic Counties. Field evaluations focused primarily on fruit inspections for pest injury and assessments of aphid infestations on newly developing terminals.

Monitoring of developing fruit indicated a decline in feeding and/or oviposition injury caused by leafrollers and plum curculio, most likely as a result of recent insecticide applications (Table 1).

Table 1. Fruit Monitoring Data

	% Leafroller Berry Infestation		% Plum Curculio Berry Infestation	
	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
5/29	0.03	0.8	0.01	0.6
6/6	0.006	0.2	0.003	0.3
6/12	0.002	0.2	0	0

Aphids

Aphid populations declined slightly compared with the previous week, with average colony sizes remaining low at approximately 1–5 aphids per shoot (Table 2).

Table 2: Aphid Infestation on New Terminals

	Aphids % Terminal Infestation	
	Avg	High
5/23	1.5 A	14
5/29	2.83 A	38
6/6	2.189 A	30
6/12	1.9 A	26
Aphid Colony Size: A: 1-5, B: 6-10, C: 11-15, D: >16		

Trap Monitoring

Spotted-wing drosophila (Table 3), sharp-nosed leafhoppers (Table 4), and oriental beetle (Table 4) trap captures increased this week. At this time, spotted-wing drosophila is the primary target pest for insecticide applications.

Table 3. Spotted-Wing Drosophila and Blueberry Maggot Traps

	Spotted-Wing Drosophila				**Blueberry Maggot**			
	Atlantic County		Burlington County		Atlantic County		Burlington County	
	Avg	High	Avg	High	Avg	High	Avg	High
6/6	8.99	35	2.86	7	0.03	1	0	0
6/12	9.9	46	3.7	25	0	0	0	0

Table 4. Sharp-nosed Leafhopper and Oriental Beetle Traps

	Sharp-nosed Leafhopper				**Oriental Beetle**			
	Atlantic County		Burlington County		Atlantic County		Burlington County	
	Avg	High	Avg	High	Avg	High	Avg	High
6/6	1.42	16	1.25	7	5.78	35	2.57	14
6/12	0.56	12	4.8	46	62	340	47	170

Cranberry fruitworm and cherry fruitworm traps were monitored last week. Trap captures indicate that activity of both pests remains higher in Burlington County than in Atlantic County (Table 5).

When selecting insecticide applications, spotted-wing drosophila and blueberry maggot should remain the primary management targets at this stage of the season. However, growers should also consider products that provide effective control of cranberry fruitworm and cherry fruitworm to ensure comprehensive crop protection.

Table 5. Cranberry/Cherry Fruitworm Traps

	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
5/29	0.14	1	1	3	0	0	1.5	6
6/6	3.57	20	1.43	5	0	0	0.75	2
6/12	0	0	3.4	7	1.25	3	0.2	1
AC: Atlantic County, BC: Burlington County								

Scale

Crawler activity of both terrapin scale and Putnam scale continues to increase (Table 6). Growers who observed scale infestations on the packing or sorting line last season should begin considering management options at this time.

As noted in the previous bulletin, the IPM scouting team began monitoring fruit for scale infestations. During last week's scouting, scale-infested fruit were detected in some fields (Table 7).

Table 6. Scale Traps

	Putnam		Terrapin	
	Avg	High	Avg	High
5/23	36.85	230	1.8	8
5/29	65.17	352	21.2	41
6/6	136.25	402	75.25	84
6/12	164	639	96	202

Table 7. Scale Infestation on Fruit

	Scale % infestation on fruit	
	Avg	High
6/12	0.13	2.1

Diseases

The IPM scouting team has observed anthracnose symptoms in some 'Duke' fields. Growers should continue to monitor susceptible varieties and consult the Rutgers Blueberry Commercial Guide for current fungicide recommendations and management options or visit:

https://extension.rutgers.edu/sites/default/files/2026-03/bb-v42n01.pdf